

Water, death, and angry ninja take the forefront in this exciting volume of the legendary *Lone Wolf and Cub* series. A pitiful ferryboat girl must watch as the Lone Wolf, Ogami Itto, stands against the man she loves. A rogue swordsman-for-hire learns a valuable lesson about Bushido, the Way of the Warrior, from Ogami's steely blade. And the Lone Wolf faces the treachery of the Kurokuwa ninja clan, taking employment as a lowly river porter in a clever plan to steal the secret plans of his arch-enemy, the Yagyu clan, declaring war against them all!

"You want epic? **Lone Wolf and Cub**...*is considered by many to be one of the best series ever in comics."*

— William J. Dowling
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Published for the first time in America in the Japanese format.

■ 2000 HARVEY AWARD WINNER



LONE WOLF AND CUB

KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA

LONE WOLF AND CUB

子連れ狼



DARK HORSE COMICS

STUDIO PROTEUS

子連れ狼

Front cover illustration by FRANK MILLER *and* LYNN VARLEY

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DARK HORSE COMICS

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ECHO OF THE ASSASSIN

By KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA

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ECHO OF THE ASSASSIN

子連れ狼

By KAZUO KOIKE
& GOSEKI KOJIMA



VOLUME

9

A NOTE TO READERS

Lone Wolf and Cub is famous for its carefully researched re-creation of Edo-Period Japan. To preserve the flavor of the work, we have chosen to retain many Edo-Period terms that have no direct equivalents in English. Japanese is written in a mix of Chinese ideograms and a syllabic writing system, resulting in numerous synonyms. In the glossary, you may encounter words with multiple meanings. These are words written with Chinese ideograms that are pronounced the same but carry different meanings. A Japanese reader seeing the different ideograms would know instantly which meaning it is, but these synonyms can cause confusion when Japanese is spelled out in our alphabet. *O-yurushi o* (please forgive us)!

LONE WOLF AND CUB



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Wife of the Heart. 9

Wandering Samarai 70

Echo of the Assassin 130

Naked Worms 190

The Yagyū Letter: Prologue 261

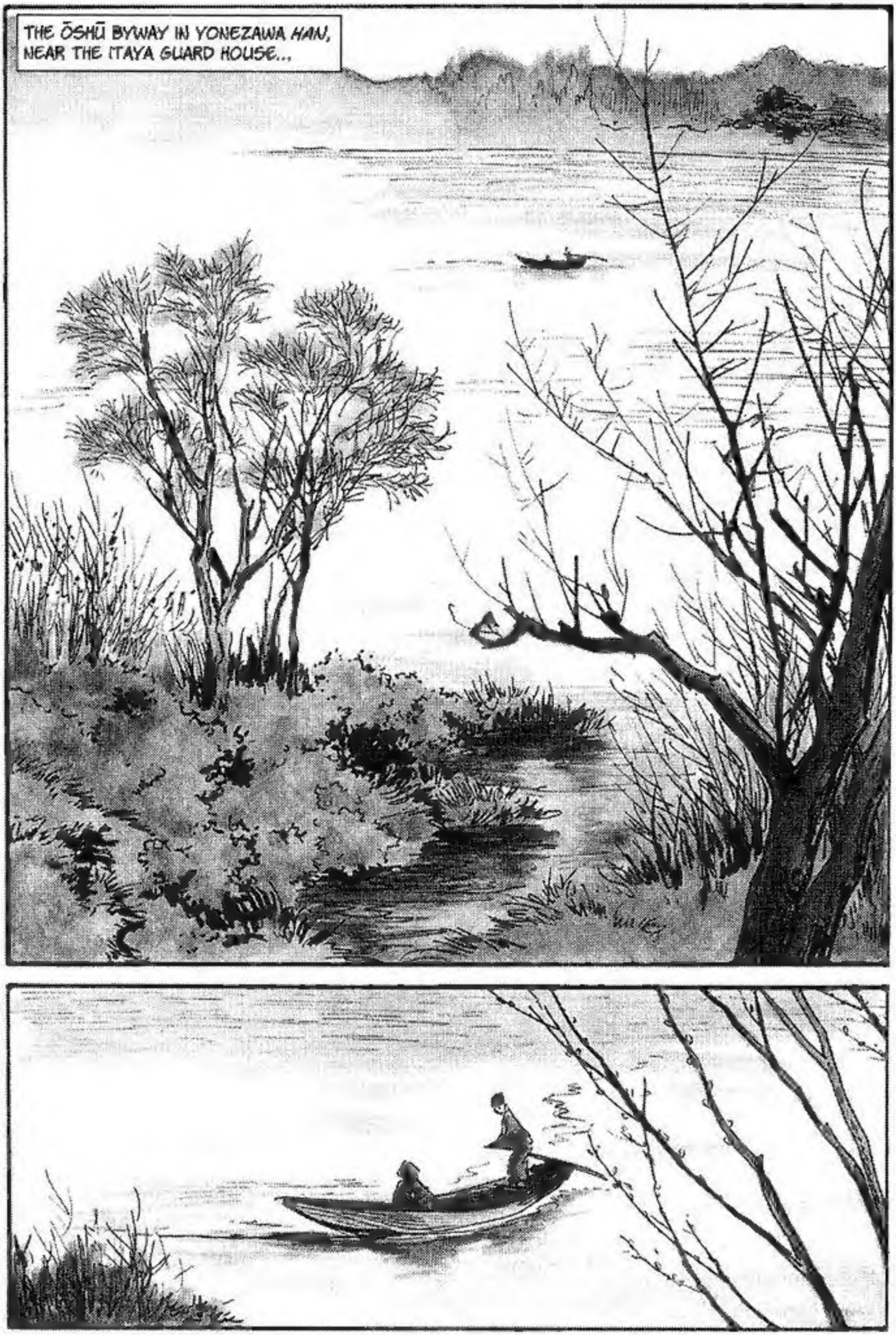
Glossary 285

Creator Profiles 287

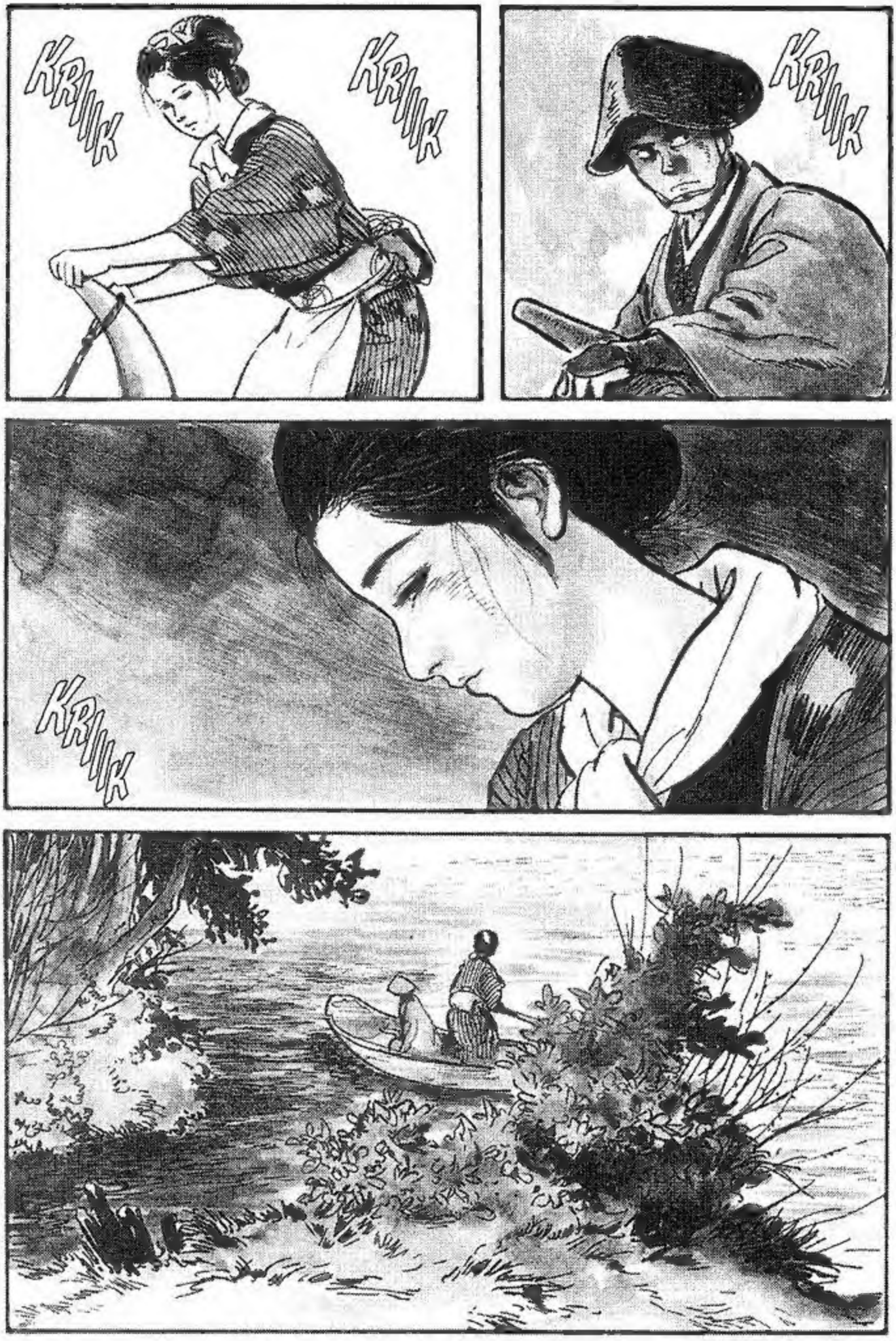
the forty-fifth

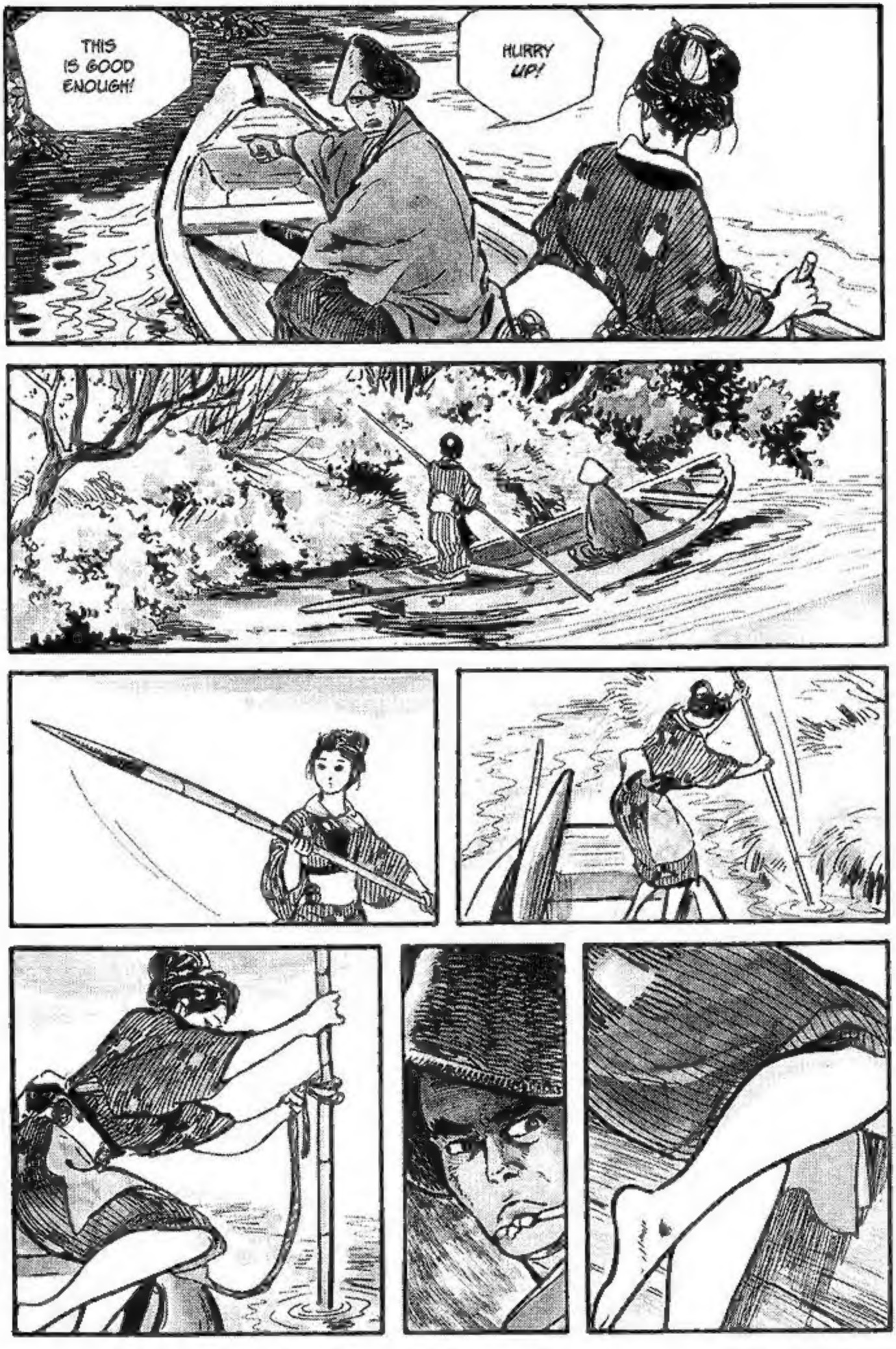


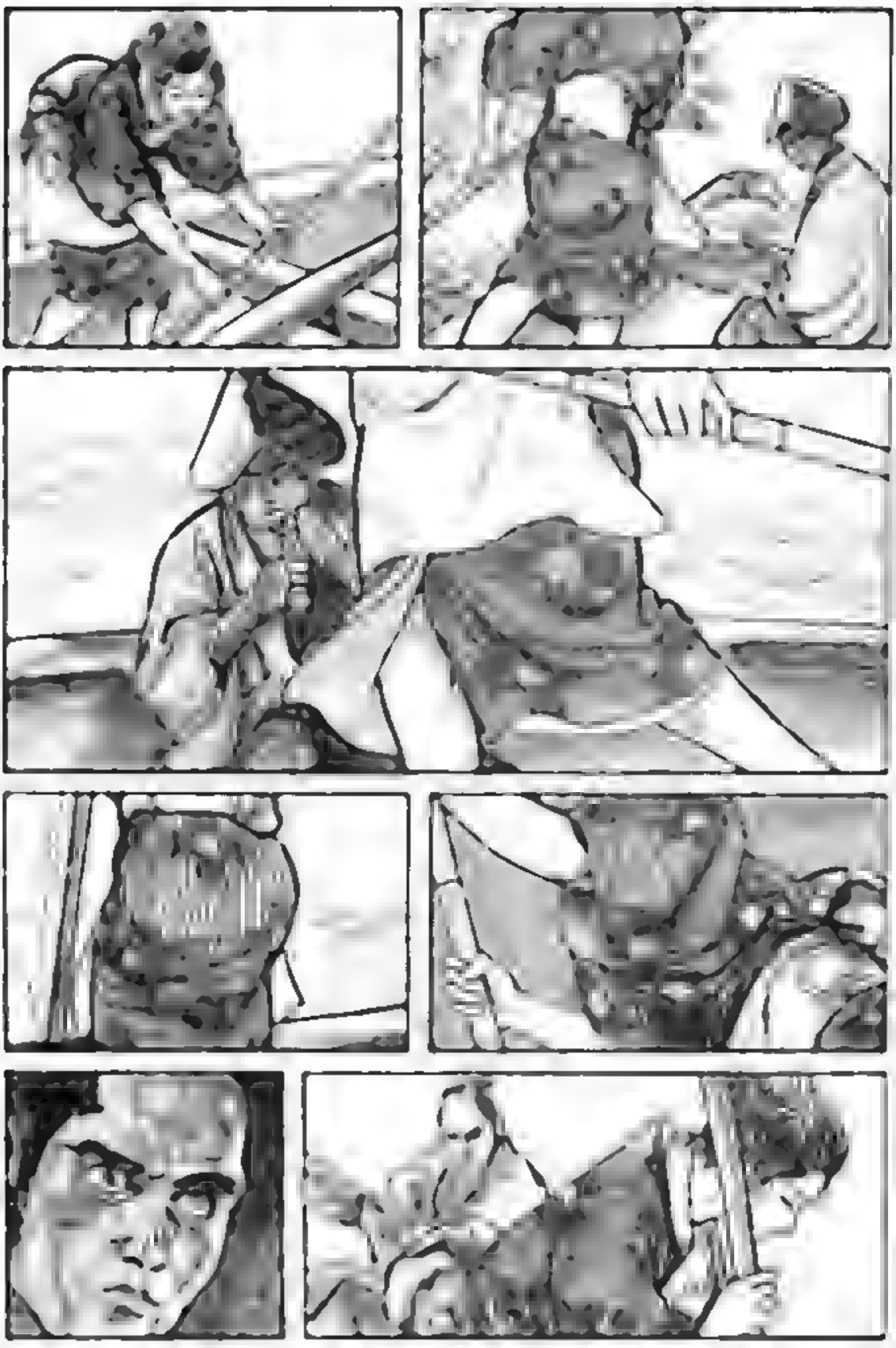
Wife of the Heart


THE ŌSHŪ BYWAY IN YONEZAWA HAN, NEAR THE ITAYA GUARD HOUSE...


...AND THE OMONO RIVER.


KRUK
KRUK
KRUK
KRUK


THIS IS GOOD ENOUGH!
HURRY UP!

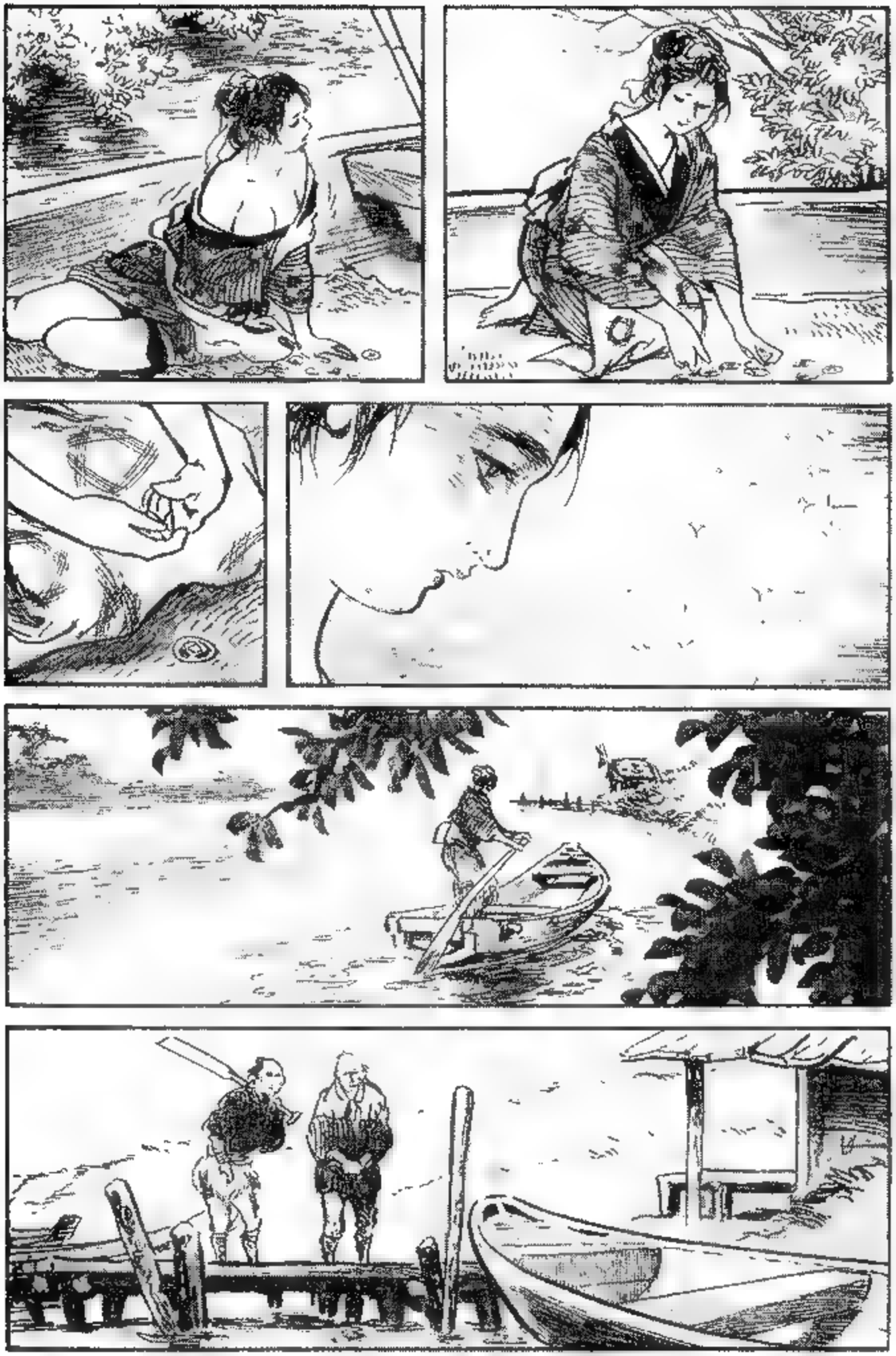




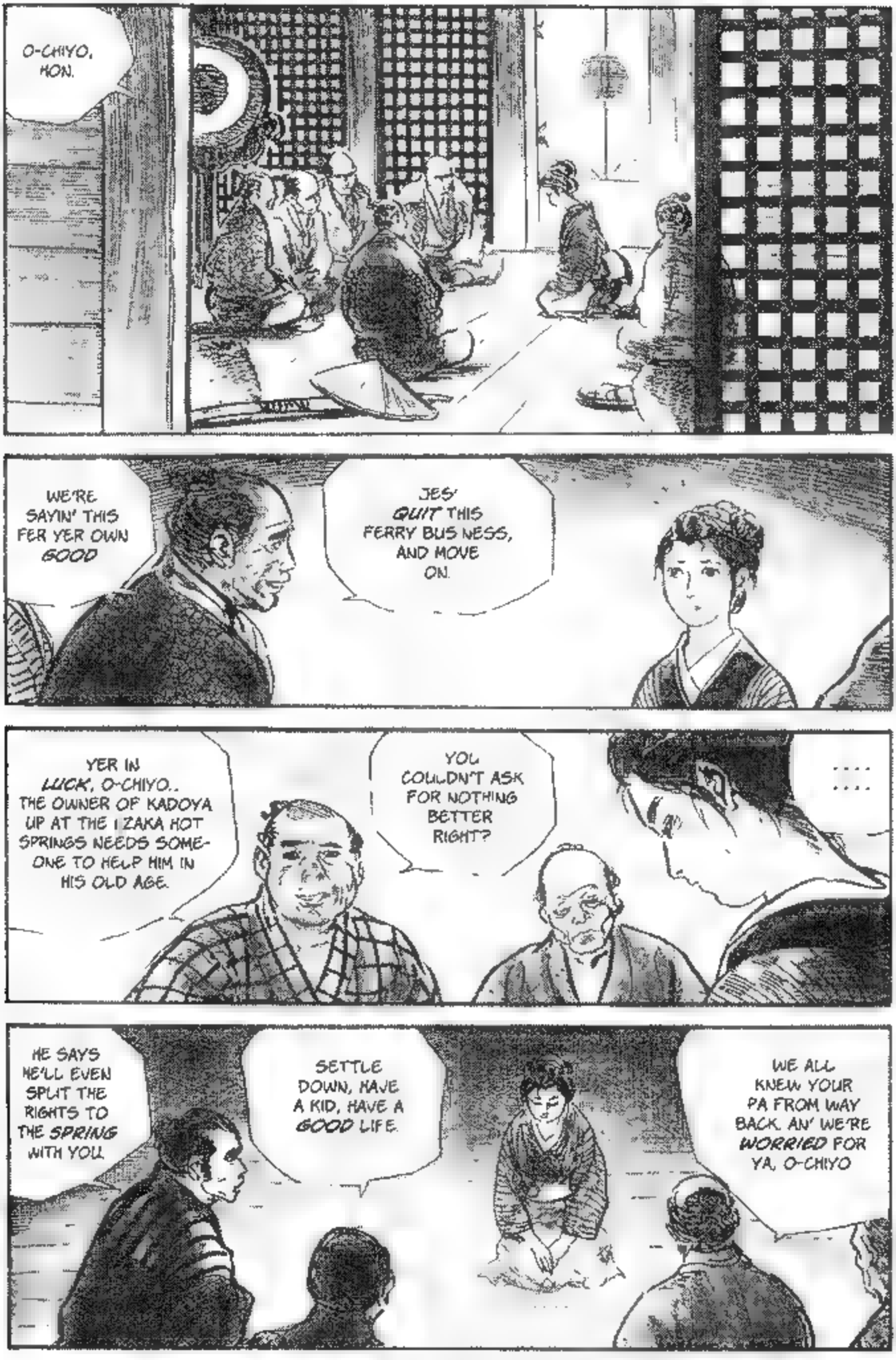



SPLSH
SPLSH
SPLSH SPLSH






MISS O-CHIYO...? YA GOT A MINUTE?


O-CHIYO, HON.
WE'RE SAYIN' THIS FER YER OWN GOOD
JES' QUIT THIS FERRY BUS NESS, AND MOVE ON.
YER IN LUCK, O-CHIYO.. THE OWNER OF KADOYA UP AT THE IZAKA HOT SPRINGS NEEDS SOME-ONE TO HELP HIM IN HIS OLD AGE.
YOU COULDN'T ASK FOR NOTHING BETTER RIGHT?
....
....
HE SAYS HE'LL EVEN SPLIT THE RIGHTS TO THE SPRING WITH YOU.
SETTLE DOWN, HAVE A KID, HAVE A GOOD LIFE.
WE ALL KNEW YOUR PA FROM WAY BACK. AN' WE'RE WORRIED FOR YA, O-CHIYO

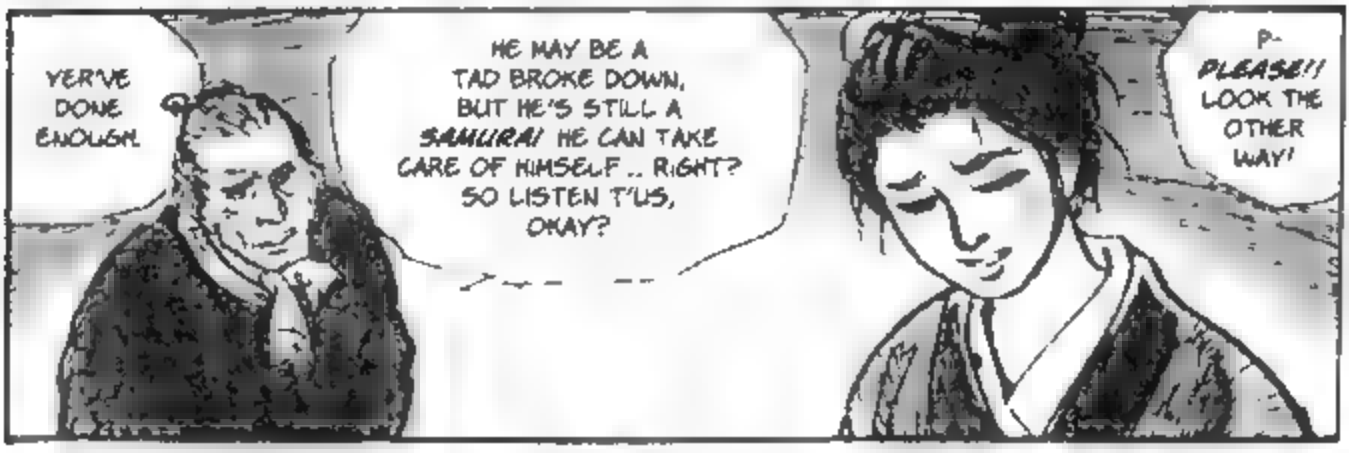

THE WAY THINGS IS NOW, WE COULDN'T LOOK YER OLD PA IN THE FACE.
. . . .
. . . .
OF COURSE YA HAVE TUH HELP HAYASE-SAMA—HE SAVED YER LIFE!
BUT THERE BE LIMITS AND SELLIN' YER BODY..
DON'T SAY IT! NOT THAT!
P-PLEASE DON'T SAY IT JUST LIKE THAT
I GOTTA SAY IT, O-CHIYO! IT'S BREAKIN' OUR HEARTS WATCHIN' YA.
IF HAYASE-SAMA WAS FAMILY, OR YER HUSBAND, IT MIGHT BE DIFFERENT
BUT HE AIN'T! SO WE GOTTA SPEAK OUT
Ai
HE'S RIGHT O-CHIYO! SURE, HAYASE-SAMA SAVED YA.
BUT T WAS THEM SAMURAI THAT WERE BAD YOU DIDN'T DO NOTHIN!
IF HAYASE-SAMA WAS GONNA GET BETTER AND MARRY YOU SOMEDAY, THAT'D CHANGE THINGS BUT HE AIN'T!


HE'S DOWN AND OUT NOW, BUT HE USED TO BE ONE OF THEM HIGH RANKIN' SAMURAI
HIM MARRY A FERRY-BOAT GIRL?
A GIRL WHO SELLS HER BODY?
P-LEASE
P-LEASE D-DON'T
YA WANT US TO TELL HAYASE-SAMA? TELL HIM HE WOULDN'T HAVE HIS FOOD OR MEDICINE IF THIS POOR GIRL WARN'T TRADING HER VIRGINITY, HER TREASURE TO BUY 'EM?
SO I'D RATHER DIE
I COULDN'T LIVE!
IF HAYASE-SAMA KNEW, I COULDN'T


HE'S WITH THAT ROMAN WHAT CAME IN DON'T GIVE HIM NO NEVER MIND


THAT'S WHY WE DON'T TELL HAYASE-SAMA. 'CUZ WE'RE AFRAID IF WE DO, SOMETHIN' TERRIBLE'LL HAPPEN!
BUT PEOPLE ARE STARTIN' TA TALK, O-CHIYO! THE WOMENFOLK CAN'T KEEP THEIR YAPS SHUT
ARE SAYING IT'S THE SHAME OF THE ONONO RIVER. A STAIN ON ALL US BOATMEN. IT'S GETTIN' OUTTA HAND!
AND NOW ALL THEM YOUNG BLOODS, EVEN SAMURAI, COMIN' HERE LOOKIN' FOR YA!
AT THIS RATE THERE'S GONNA BE A BLOWUP, CLEAR AS
RUMORS ARE FLYIN', GIRL. AND WITH ALL THEM YOUNG FELLERS COMIN' TO RIDE O-CHIYO'S
ONE DAY IT'LL BE FISTS AND SWORDS FLYING! OVER


AND THEN IT'LL BE TOO LATE, UNDERSTAND? HAYASE-SAMA'LL HEAR ABOUT IT FROM SOMEONE
AND THEN EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE FOR HIM, PAYIN' IN BLOOD TO HELP HIM,
IT'LL ALL BE FOR NAUGHT!
LOOK'EE WE'RE NOT BLAMIN' YOU, O-CHIYO BUT JEST FORGET HAYASE-SAMA, AND GET YERSELF TO IIZAKA


YER'VE DONE ENOUGH
HE MAY BE A TAD BROKE DOWN, BUT HE'S STILL A SAMURAI! HE CAN TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF .. RIGHT? SO LISTEN T'US, OKAY?
P- PLEASE!! LOOK THE OTHER WAY!


JUST, JUST A LITTLE LONGER! I WON'T CAUSE YOU ANY MORE GRIEF, I PROMISE BUT... JUST ONE MORE MONTH
I BEG YOU!



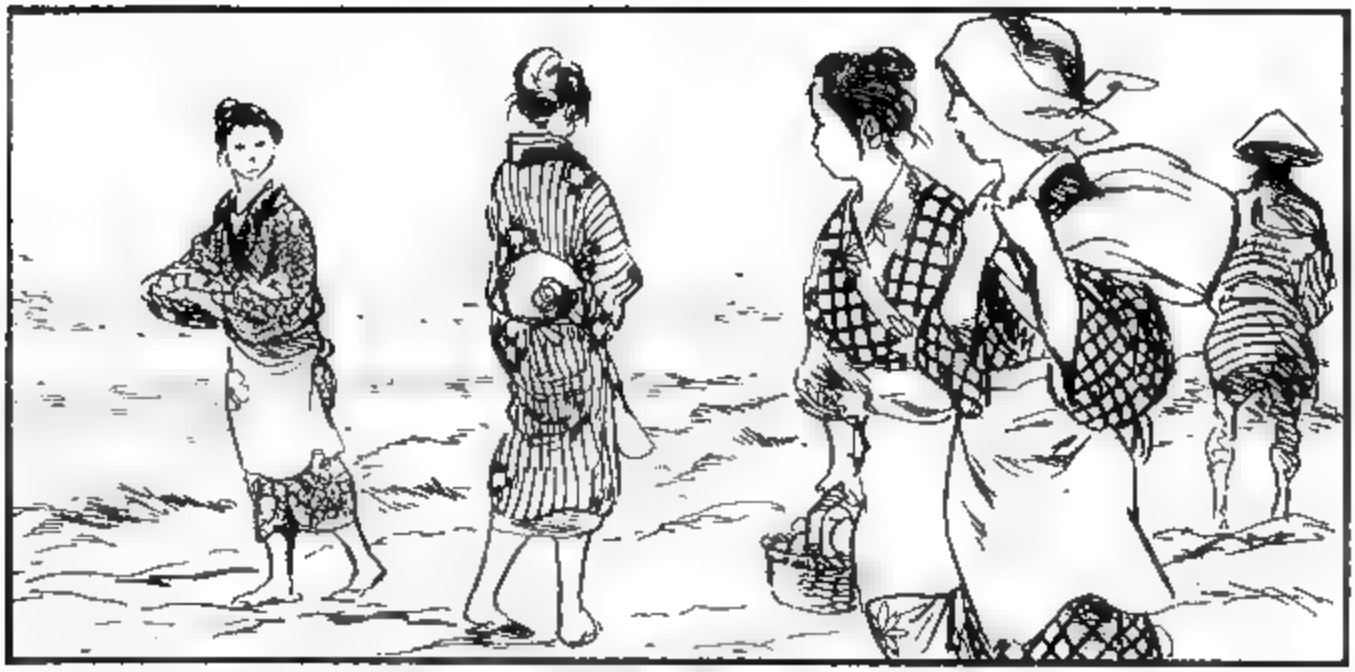








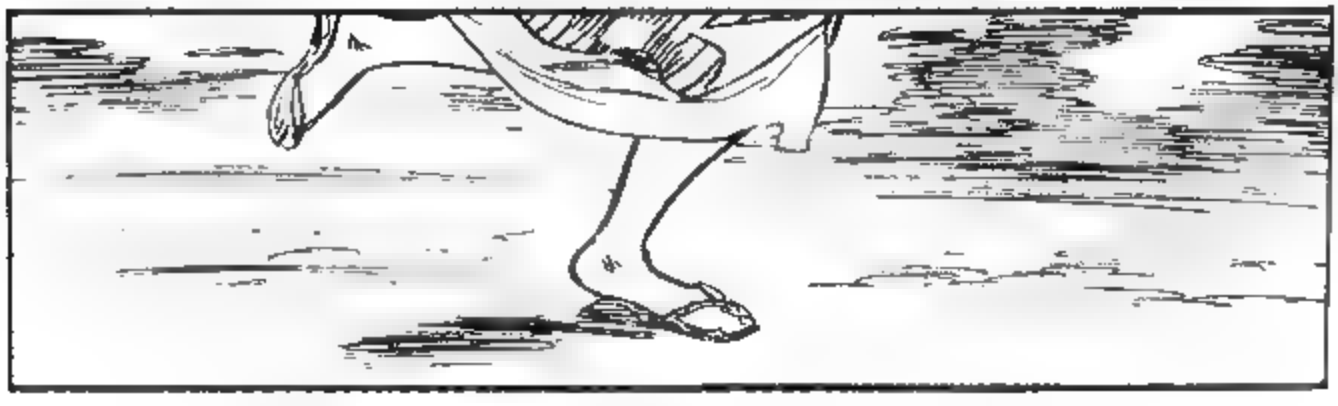

MY HUSBAND SWEATED TO CATCH THESE CARP!
AND I HAIN'T SELLIN' 'EM TO NO WHORE!
MAYBE YOU THINK YOU CAN FATTEN UP ON 'EM AND CATCH MORE OF OUR MENFOLK! HMPH!
WELL, NOT MY MAN, YOU DON'T!
NOW YOU GIT!
I I'D LIKE—
DON'T YOU EVEN TOUCH 'EM!







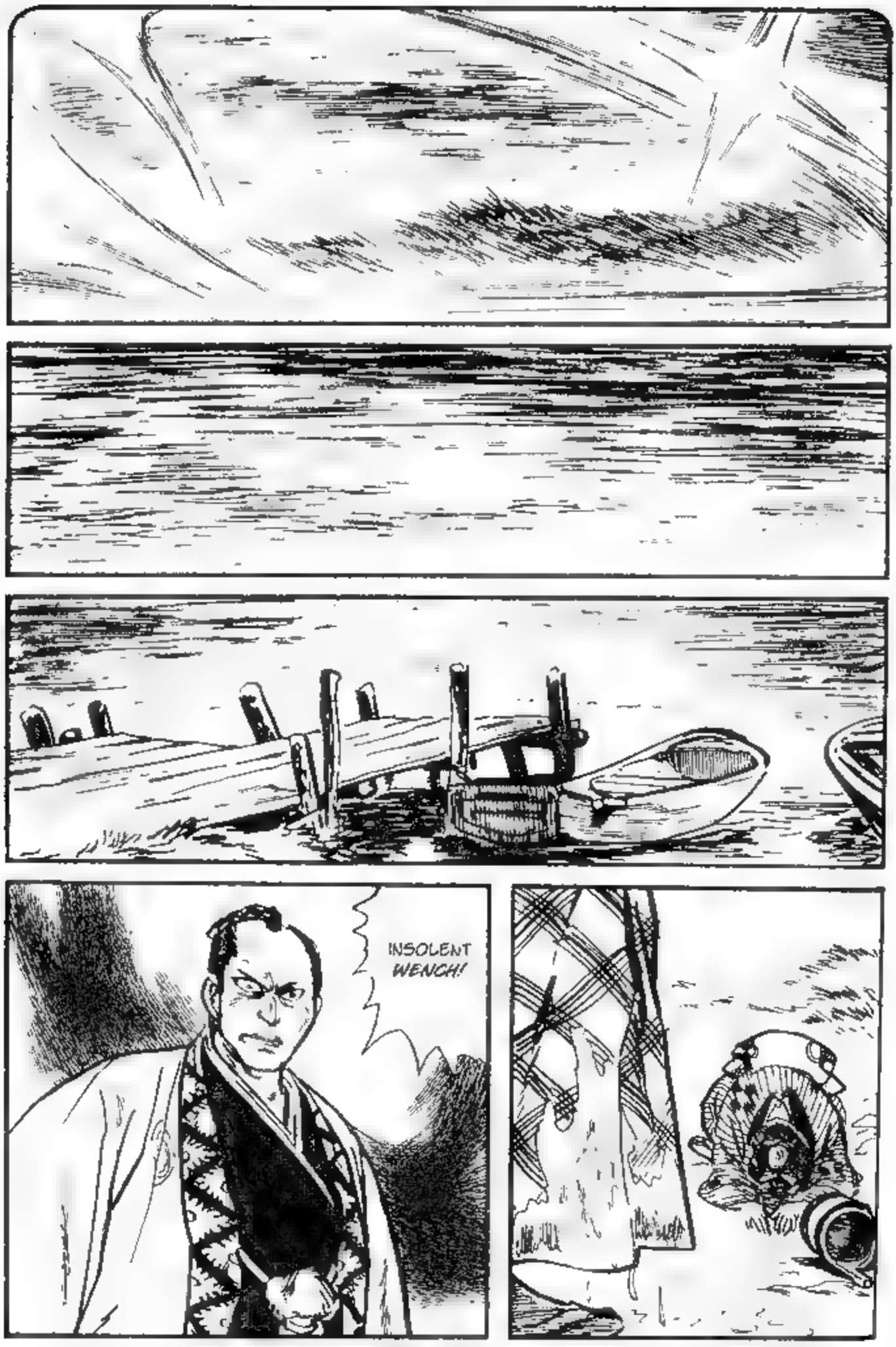





AHH...!
SNIFF
SNIFF
THEM MEAN BITCHES' LORDY.


HERE YOU K.N HAVE 'EM JES' DON'T YA CRY
....
'KAY
AN' IN EXCHANGE
AH?!




INSOLENT
WENCH!


INTOL-
ERABLE!
YOU
SHALL PAY
FOR THIS!
OH!
OH!!


HYAA!
EEK!
HOLD!
HOLD, MY LORD!
DAIGAKU-SAMA! PLEASE STAY YOUR HAND!
YOU DARE INTER-FERE?!
SHE BORE YOU NO ILL, MY LORD. PLEASE, OVERLOOK HER SIMPLE CARELESSNESS


NEVER! NOW MOVE!
MY LORD! IF SHE HAS ERRED, IT REFLECTS UPON MYSELF AND THE ITAYA GUARD HOUSE I COMMAND—IT IS I WHO SHOULD BE PUNISHED!
HUH! WELL SAID, HAYASE.
HEH HEH HEH... IF SHE'S SO WORTH PROTECTING...
.THEN YOU MUST BE WILLING TO TAKE HER PLACE, YES?!
I AM!
HOW INTERESTING! VERY WELL— STRIP HIM!


SHRAKKK
KRAKK
FWAKK
SHRAKK
KRAKK
FWAKK
SHRAKK
SHRAKK
FWAKK
KRAKK


SKRAKK
FWAKK
SHRAKK
FWAKK
SHAK K
KRAKK
KRAKK
AHN!! O-SAMURAI-SAMA!
OH, OH! NOOO!
HUH! TOUGH BASTARD!
:hahh:
:hahh:
FWAP


O-SAMURAI-SAMA!
I I OH
WH-WHAT CAN I DO?!
:Sniff:

















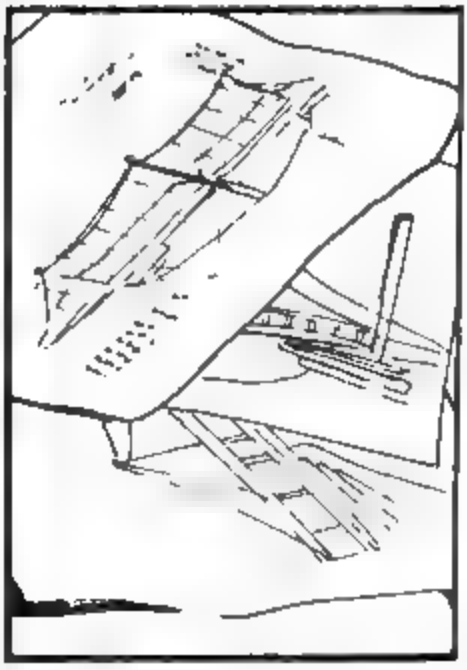















THWAP-!
DONE! AT LAST!!
OH ?
ARE YOU STILL AT WORK?!
IF YOU DON'T GET YOUR REST
DON'T WORRY! NOW THAT SPRING'S HERE, MY WHOLE BODY FEELS LIGHTER.


IN ANY CASE, CHIYO—I'VE DONE IT!
FINALLY!
LOOK! THIS WILL WORK! I KNOW IT!
YES FINISHED AT LAST
GOOD NESS!
YOU KNOW IT'S BEEN THE DREAM OF THE HAYASE FAMILY TO BRIDGE THE OMONO, EVER SINCE WE WERE ENTRUSTED WITH THE RIVER GUARD HOUSE...
MY FATHER POURED HIS LIFE INTO IT, AND I'VE KEPT THE FAITH. IT'S ALL I'VE LIVED FOR.




OUR OLD LORD SUPPORTED THE IDEA OF A BRIDGE. BUT WHEN HE PASSED, AND HIS SON DAIGAKU-*SAMA* CAME.
I EARNED HIS WRATH, AND WAS REMOVED FROM MY POST
AND NOW, THIS BODY CAN NEVER SERVE AGAIN.
IT IT'S ALL *MY* FAULT!
ALL BECAUSE YOU HELPED ME..
BUT, CHIYO
IT WAS ALL FOR THE BEST!
EH?
I'VE BEEN ABLE TO CONCENTRATE *COMPLETELY* ON DESIGNING THE BRIDGE! IF I STILL HAD OFFICAL DUTIES, I COULD *NEVER* HAVE DONE IT!
BUT BUT.. THE *INJURIES* YOU GOT IN MY PLACE. YOUR *ILLNESS* .
OUR TIME ON EARTH IS *LIMITED*, CHIYO. THERE'S NO GREATER HAPPINESS THAN TO KNOW YOU'VE USED THAT FLEETING CHANCE TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE.


AND CHIYO!
....
....?!
I OWE IT ALL TO YOU!
THAT I COULD FINISH THESE PLANS... THAT I COULD LIVE THIS LONG..
I I ONLY
PEOPLE SAID IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO BRIDGE THE OMONO! IMPOSSIBLE!
THEY SAID IT WAS TOO WIDE! AND LIKE ITS NAME, A DEMON OF A RIVER
WHEN THE SNOWS MELT AND THE OMONO FLOODS, NOT A BRIDGE PILING MADE BY MAN COULD STAND AGAINST IT!

BUT WE *HAVE* TO BRIDGE IT! FOR YONEZAWA *HAN* AND ITS *PEOPLE!*

WITH A *BRIDGE*, TRADE WITH EDO WILL FLOURISH! THE *HAN* AND THE PEOPLE WILL *PROSPER!*

AND NO ONE EVER AGAIN WILL HAVE TO *DIE* CROSSING IT, LIKE YOUR POOR FATHER

NOW, SEE, HERE'S MY SOLUTION—A *SUSPENSION BRIDGE!* WITH A GIRDER BRIDGE, WHEN YOU DOUBLE THE LENGTH OF THE SPAN, THE WEIGHT ON THE GIRDERS INCREASES FOURFOLD!

AND THE VARIOUS STRAINS ON THE SPAN JUMP EIGHT TO *SIXTEEN-FOLD!*

BUT LOOK AT *THIS!* WITH THIS NEW CONCEPT OF MINE, YOU CAN DISPERSE THAT STRESS, SIMPLY USING SUPPORTING CABLES!

THE KEY WAS CONTROLLING THE VERTICAL OSCILLATIONS . . . .

I'M SORRY .I IMAGINE IT'S A BIT OVER YOUR HEAD.

BUT *CHIYO!* BELIEVE ME, WITHOUT YOU, THESE PLANS WOULDN'T *EXIST! THANK YOU!* ROWING THAT BOAT DAY AFTER DAY WITH THOSE FRAIL ARMS, CARING FOR ME BETTER THAN *FAMILY*

I *THANK* YOU FROM THE *BOTTOM* OF MY *HEART*

D-DON'T ..! I. .I JUST

DON'T *TALK* LIKE THAT! PLEASE! HAYASE-*SAMA*

CHIYO FROM NOW I WANT YOU TO LIVE FOR *YOURSELF*

MARRY FIND *HAPPINESS*

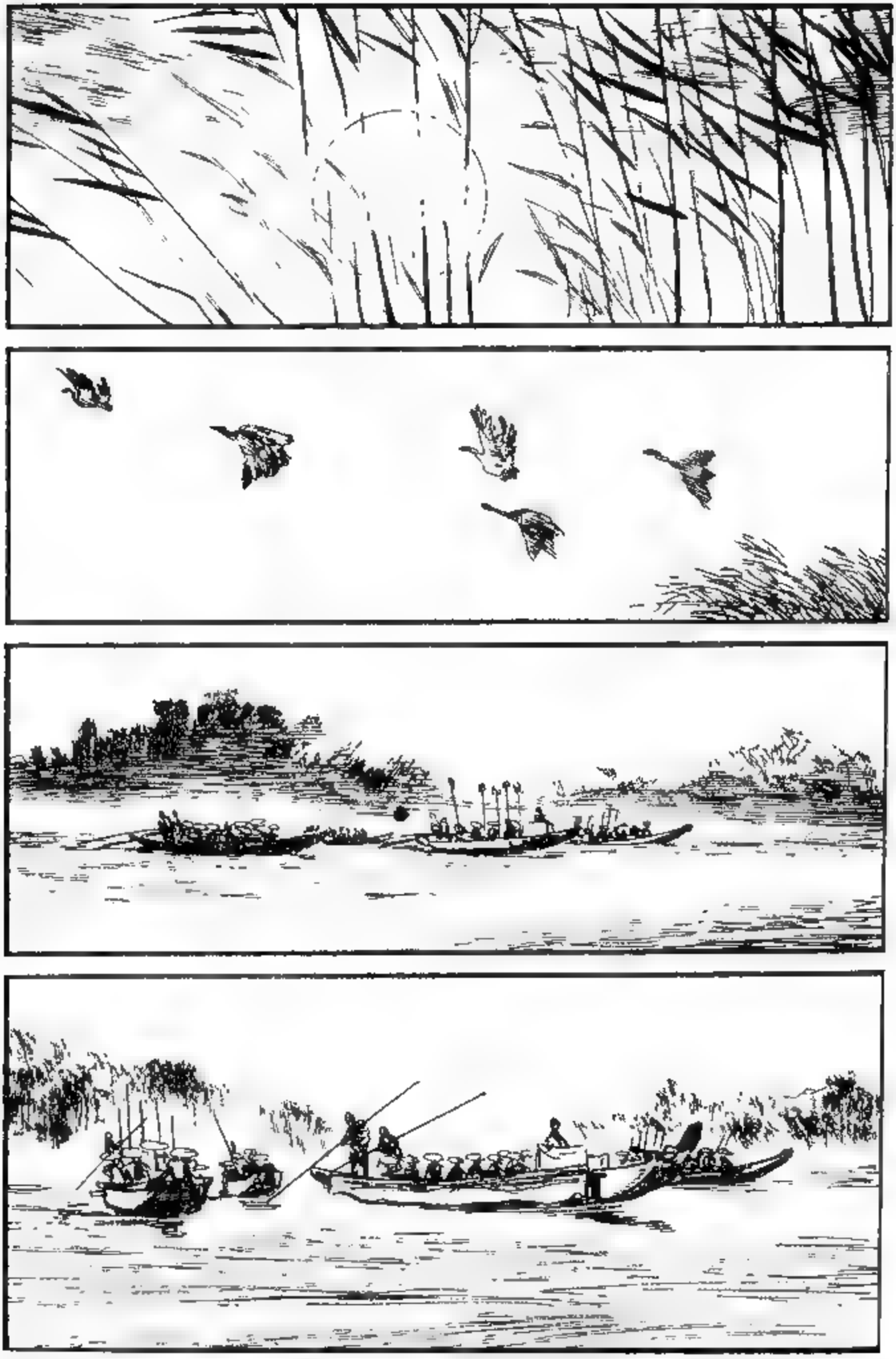
H-HAYASE-*SAMA* ?!

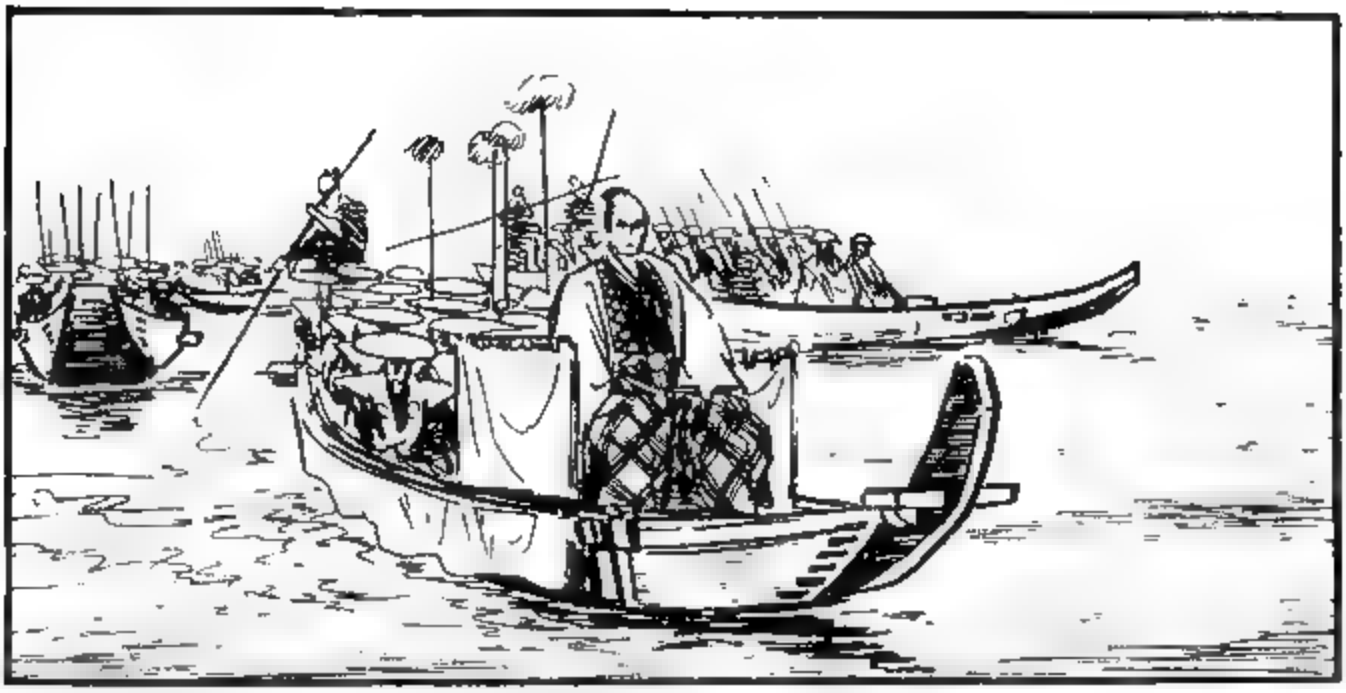
DAIGAKU-*SAMA* IS RETURNING FROM EDO. I'M GOING TO MEET HIM AND GIVE HIM THESE *PLANS*

NOT TO ASK TO RESTORE THE HAYASE FAMILY. TO PROMOTE MYSELF..*NO*


WITH THESE PLANS, ANYONE CAN BUILD MY BRIDGE! I'LL BEG HIM TO BUILD IT, EVEN IF IT COSTS ME MY LIFE! SURELY HE'LL UNDERSTAND!
THAT'S ALL I WANT, AND I WILL BE HAPPY! AND SO, CHIYO, I WANT YOU TO FIND A WOMAN'S OWN HAPPINESS
H. HOW...?! I JUST WANT TO...TO BE BY YOUR SIDE!
....
....
IF IF HAYASE-SAMA DOESN'T WANT ME
I CAN'T LIVE!
CHIYO!
DO DO YOU LOVE-


I'M NOT EVEN WORTHY TO TOUCH HAYASE-SAMA'S HAND!
I I'M DIRTY!
JUST LET ME BE NEAR YOU. JUST THAT IS ENOUGH.
AHH
sniff










DAIGAKU-SAMA!! I CRAVE AN AUDIENCE!
YOU CUR!
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE!
GET BACK!
WAIT! ISN'T THAT-HAYASE?!
MY LORD! A HUMBLE REQUEST!


I AM YOUR SERVANT HAYASE TŌGO, WHO DID OFFEND YOU THESE TWO YEARS PAST!
HRNF! I REMEMBER THAT FACE!
MY LORD I HAVE DEVISED A BRIDGE THAT CAN CROSS THE OMONO RIVER! I BEG YOU, MY LORD—PLEASE VIEW THESE PLANS.
ENOUGH! BEGONE!
I SAID I DIDN'T WANT TO SEE YOUR FACE AGAIN!
MY-MY LORD!
IF WE BRIDGE THE OMONO BOTH HAN AND CITIZENRY WILL FLOURISH! ACCIDENTS ON THE RIVER WILL—
HMPH! YOU AND YOUR BRIDGES BORE ME!
GO AWAY!
MY LORD! I BEG YOU!
SILENCE!


GET OUT OF HERE.
NNG!
THUD
WE SHOULD CUT YOU IN TWO ON THE SPOT!
BUT IT WOULD FOUL OUR SWORDS TO KILL A DOG LIKE YOU!
A D-DOG?! HOW DARE YOU!
YOU DARE TALK OF BRIDGES WHILE YOU LIVE IN SHAME WITH A FERRYBOAT GIRL?
HEH! KEPT BY A WOMAN.
WHO SELLS HER-
HRRK!
:gr nK:




WHO ARE YOU?!
BASTARD!
INTRUDER!
IDENTIFY YOURSELF!


ASSASSIN!
LONE WOLF AND CUB!




I COME FOR YOUR LIFE!
NO!! KILL HIM! KILL!


HYAA!
RYAHH!
SKRRSSH
UGH
SKSSH
AGHK!
SHUKK
GUHH

THUNK

SKSSHH

AAI

SHIK

AUGH!

SOMEBODY! HELP ME!!


HALT!
WHY DO YOU PROTECT HIM?
IT TAKES MORE THAN A HANDFUL OF DRAWINGS TO BRIDGE THE OHONO! ONLY ONE MAN CAN MUSTER THE RESOURCES— THE LORD OF OUR HAN!
YOUR BRIDGE HAS BEEN REFUSED!
A BUSHI SHOULD DIE FOR A MASTER WHO KNOWS WISDOM. NO GOOD CAN COME OF PROTECTING A FOOL. NOW— STAND BACK!
I DON'T PROTECT THE MAN .. I PROTECT THE GOOD OF THE PEOPLE! IF OUR LORD DIES NOW, HOW MANY MONTHS, HOW MANY YEARS BEFORE THE BRIDGE IS BUILT?! MY LOVE OF OUR HAN AND OUR PEOPLE SHOULD MOVE A HEART OF STONE!
YES HE'S TURNED ME DOWN. BUT IF I LAY DOWN MY LIFE FOR HIM, EVEN DAIGAKU-SAMA WILL UNDERSTAND
NO HE WILL NOT LISTEN, NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO!
W- WHY...?!


SUCH IS THE WORLD OF THE SAMURAI, THE HARSH, FOOLISH WAY OF BUSHIDŌ!
IF YOU PURSUE THIS DREAM, A DAY WILL COME WHEN YOU MUST KILL THAT WOMAN!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND! SPEAK CLEARLY!
BIDE YOUR TIME
LIVE TOGETHER, HEAL BOTH YOUR WOUNDS TOGETHER. LIVE FOR YOUR BRIDGE!
. . . .
. . . .
NOW— STAND BACK!
NEVER!
AN ASSASSIN, ARE YOU?! THEN KILL ME!
BY SAVING DAIGAKU-SAMA I SHALL PROVE MY WILL!
. . . .
. . . .


HYAA!
SKUSSH
AHH!


THUK
HRGHK!
ə'kk
....

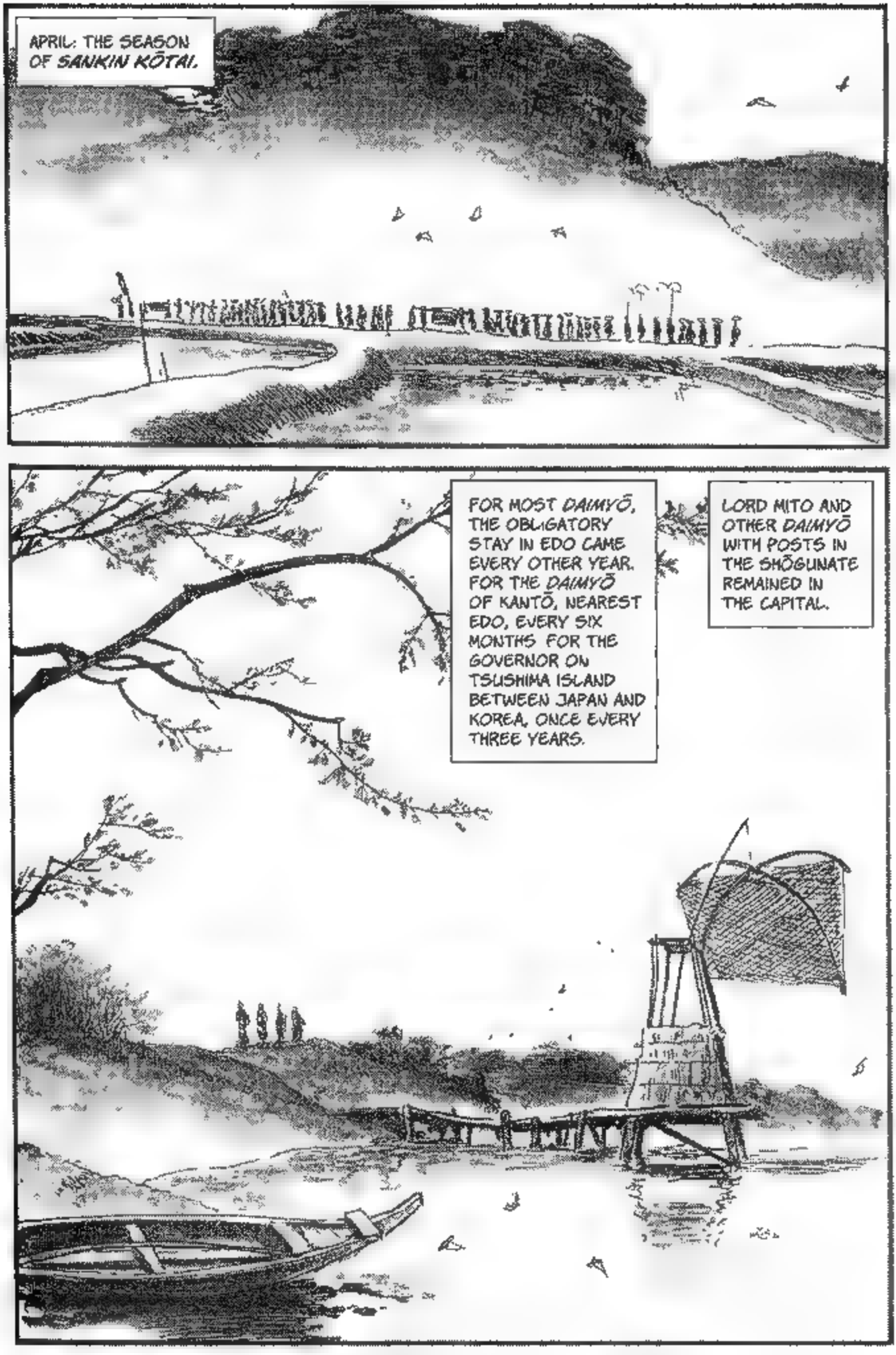

EVEN WITHOUT KNOWING ALL, HIS LIFE WOULD HAVE SEEMED AN ENDLESS HELL.
YET IF THERE ARE *PLANS*, HIS BRIDGE *WILL* BE BUILT HIS HEART AND SOUL FILL THESE PAGES. YOU MUST *LIVE*, AND FULFILL YOUR HUSBAND'S DREAM..
.FOR YOU ARE HIS *WIFE OF THE HEART.*
MY *HUS-BAND?*
WIFE OF THE HEART.



the forty-sixth

Wandering Samurai



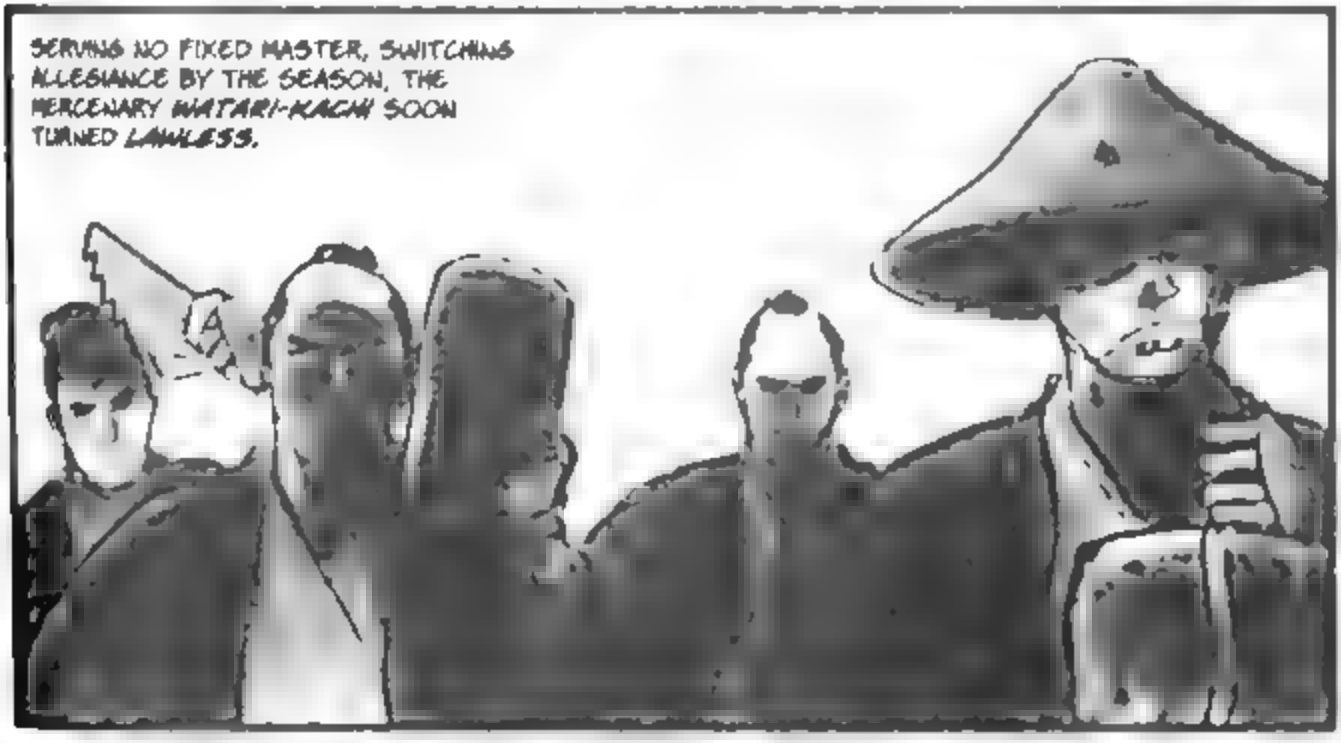

APRIL: THE SEASON OF SANKIN KŌTAI.
FOR MOST DAIMYŌ, THE OBLIGATORY STAY IN EDO CAME EVERY OTHER YEAR. FOR THE DAIMYŌ OF KANTŌ, NEAREST EDO, EVERY SIX MONTHS. FOR THE GOVERNOR ON TSUSHIMA ISLAND BETWEEN JAPAN AND KOREA, ONCE EVERY THREE YEARS.
LORD MITO AND OTHER DAIMYŌ WITH POSTS IN THE SHŌGUNATE REMAINED IN THE CAPITAL.



WATARI-KACHI WAS THE WINDOW-DRESSING OF THE *SANKIN KŌTAI* SYSTEM. WHILE WEALTHY *DAIMYŌ* COULD AFFORD THE RETAINERS IT TOOK TO PROVIDE BOTH PROTECTION AND MAJESTY ON THE ROAD TO AND FROM EDO. A *DAIMYŌ* FROM A *HAN* WITH A TAX BASE OF A HUNDRED THOUSAND *KOKU* OR LESS COULD ILL AFFORD SUCH LUXURY AND SO THEY TURNED TO TEMPORARY *KACHI* FOOT SOLDIERS. THE LOWEST OF THE LOW IN SAMURAI SOCIETY HIRED ON FOR THE DURATION OF THE *SANKIN KOTAI* JOURNEY. ON THE OUTSIDE: LOW-RANKING *BUSHI*; ON THE INSIDE: SOMETHING ELSE ALTOGETHER. THESE BANDS OF HIRED "STRAW MEN" WERE THE MUTANT OFFSPRING OF THE DEFORMATIONS OF *BUKE* SOCIETY.



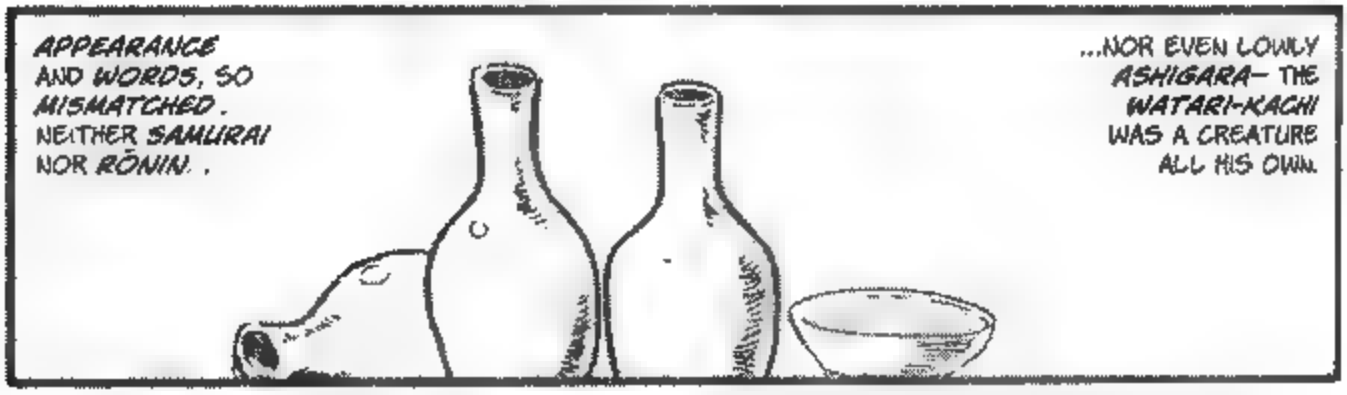



SERVING NO FIXED MASTER, SWITCHING ALLEGIANCE BY THE SEASON, THE MERCENARY WATARI-KACHI SOON TURNED LAWLESS.


AND SINCE THEY NEED ONLY SLIP THROUGH THE CLOSELY GUARDED CHECKPOINTS AND INTO THEIR EMPLOYER'S MAN TO THROW OFF ANY PURSUER, THEY WERE MORE FEARED AND HATED ALONG
THIS YEAR WOULD BE NO EXCEPTIO-


STILL HAVEN'T SEEN A GOOD WOMAN YET
PATIENCE, PATIENCE.
WE'RE IN NO RUSH. WE'VE GOT FOUR DAYS TO GET THERE
YEAH, BUT THE ONLY FUN WE EVER GET OUTTA THIS SHIT JOB IS A GOOD PIECE OF ASS
IF IT WASN'T FOR THAT I'D HAVE DUMPED THIS CRAP LONG AGO
OH, YEAH...ANY BITCH ON THE HIGHWAY, YOURS FOR THE TAKING. MAKES ALL THE BULLSHIT WORTHWHILE, EH?


THOUGH SOME OF US DON'T SEEM T' THINK SO. HEH, HEH!


APPEARANCE AND WORDS, SO MISMATCHED. NEITHER SAMURAI NOR RŌNIN.
...NOR EVEN LOWLY ASHIGARA— THE WATARI-KACHI WAS A CREATURE ALL HIS OWN.

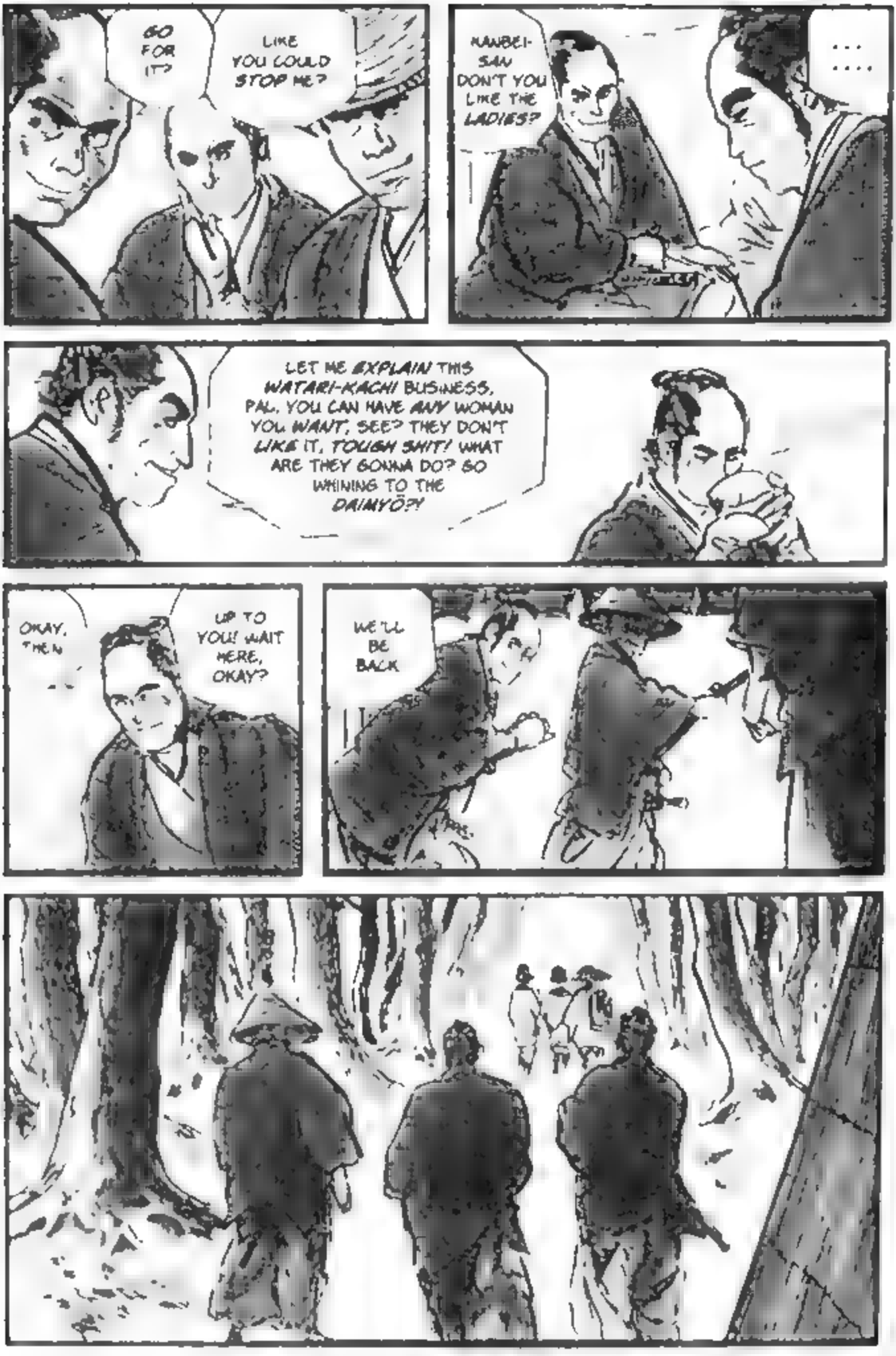

YO! MASTER KANBEI! WANT A SLUG?
NO.


YOU'RE ONE TOUGH BUGGER TO GET ALONG WITH.
CAN'T RELAX AROUND YOU, PAL.

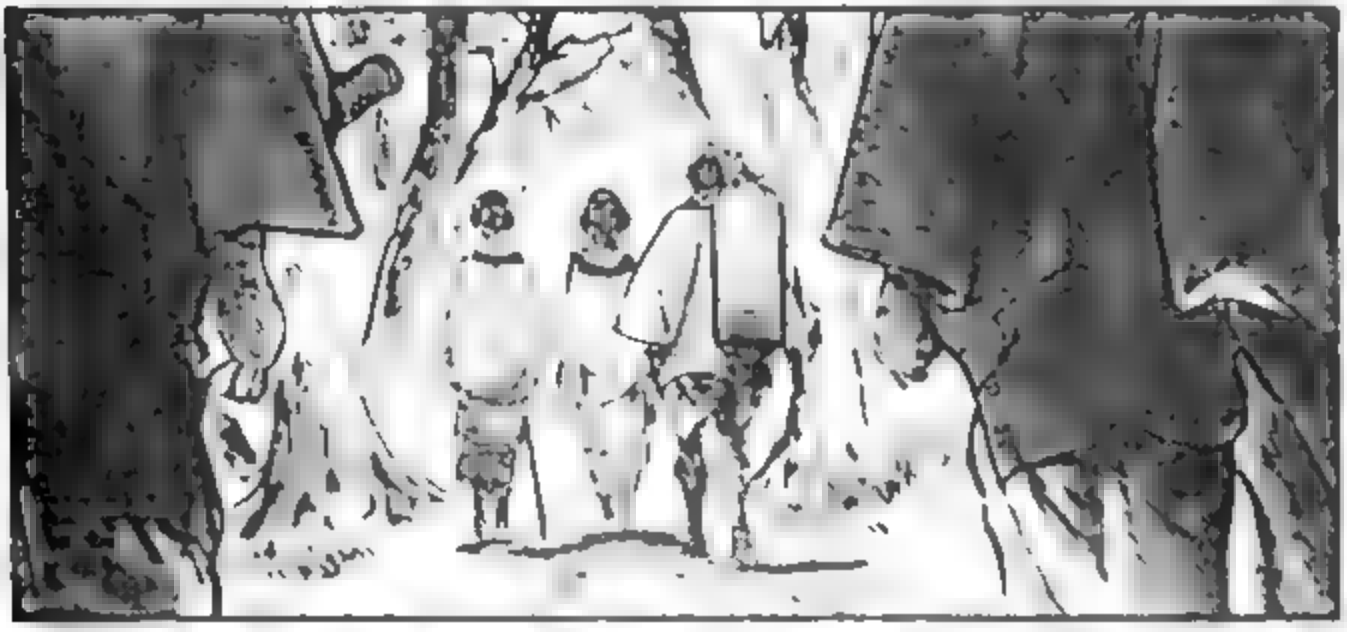

MAYBE YOU WERE SOME SUPER SAMURAI ONCE, BUT YOU'RE A WATARI-KACHI NOW...SO DON'T BE SUCH A FRIGGIN' TIGHT-ASS!
. . . .
. . . .


WHOA ...!


WOW THAT'S ALL RIGHT THE WHOLE SIXTY NINE BIT
DIBS ON THE DAUGHTERS!


GO FOR IT?
LIKE YOU COULD STOP ME?
KANBEI-SAN DON'T YOU LIKE THE LADIES?
...
LET ME EXPLAIN THIS WATARI-KACHI BUSINESS, PAL. YOU CAN HAVE ANY WOMAN YOU WANT, SEE? THEY DON'T LIKE IT, TOUGH SHIT! WHAT ARE THEY GONNA DO? GO WHINING TO THE DAIMYŌ?!
OKAY, THEN
UP TO YOU! WAIT HERE, OKAY?
WE'LL BE BACK










IN A FEW DAYS WE'LL
GIVE IT UP
SO THE SECRET, MA'AM, IS TO LIE BACK AND ENJOY IT. SHUT YOUR EYES FOR AN HOUR, AND IT'LL ALL BE OVER
WE DON'T TAKE NOTHING,


IT'S NOT LIKE YOU CAN RUN OUT, RIGHT? USE IT OR LOSE IT, DON'T THEY SAY? WE'RE JUST HERE TO HELP
MOTHER
NO! AAAH!
HEY, HEY!




AHH!!
NO NO NO!!!
AAAH!
DAUGHTER!!
EEEK!


NGG. ..?
AAAH?!
HYAA!
BAS-TARDS! SCUM!!


RYAAAA!
HOLY SHIT!
D-DAMN!!


HAIEEYAA!
OW!!
WHOA!!!
I, I'LL CHOP YOU!
AHRNNG!! Y-YOU-!
YOU BASTARDS! MY LADY! AND THE YOUNG MISS?!


YOW!
I'LL SMASH YOUR BRAINS OUT!
SCUM!!
THUD
DAMN YOU!
YEAH!


KIIAA!
KRAANG
OWW! AUGH!
KRAKK
WHOK
HELP! HELP!
I'LL KILL YOU FOR THIS!
W-WAIT! STOP!!
IF . IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO US, YOU'RE DEAD, TOO!


H-HE'S RIGHT! WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO GUARD MIZUNO-SAMA OF KARIYA HAN!
IF YOU HURT US, MIZUNO-SAMA WILL—
TO HELL WITH HIM! YOU'RE GONNA PAY, YOU ROTTEN BASTARDS!
I'LL KILL YOU!!
FWHSSH
AG!
BRAK
HELP! SOME-BODY!


K-KANBEI-SAN!
SAVE US! HE'S—
....
HU RYAA A!


CRACK
AAAYAAH


WHOA!!
SH-
SHIT!!
OH,
OH ?!




FORGIVE ME!
SHUK
AHGH!!
SSSS

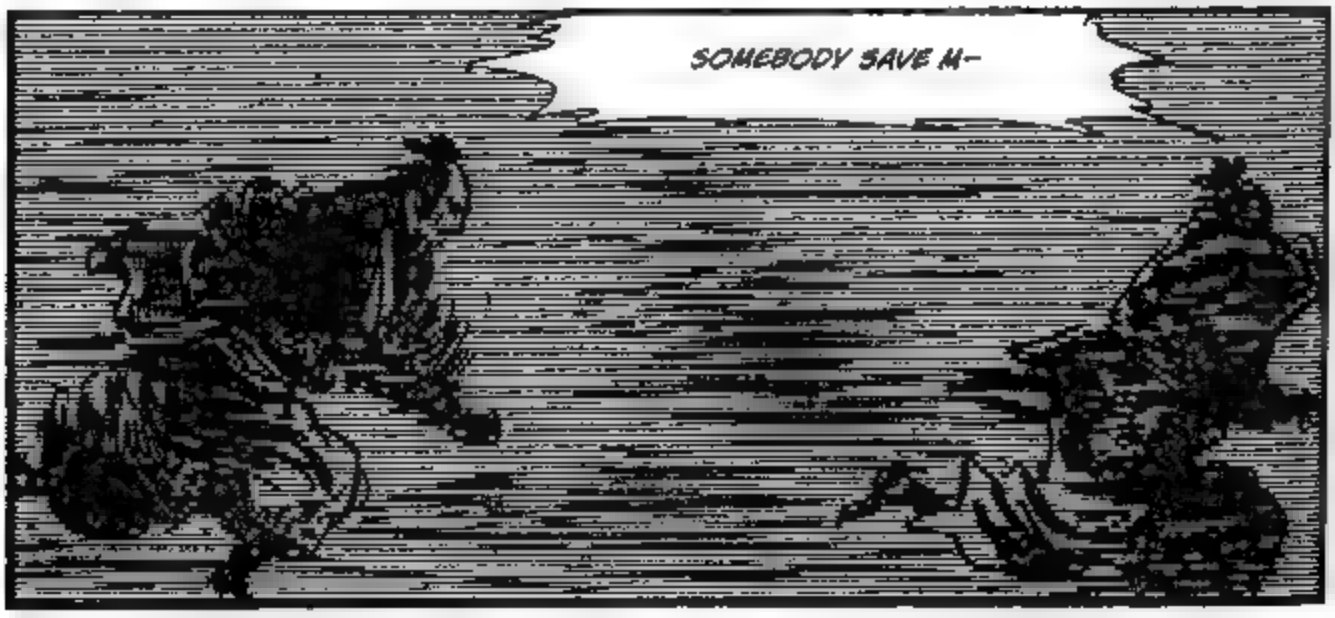

K-K-
KANBEI-
SAN?!
OH, GOD
DID .DID YOU
HAVE TO KILL
THEM?!


IF YOU'D JUST ACTED AS NAMELESS WATARI-KACHI, I COULD HAVE TURNED MY BACK!
IT WAS NONE OF MY BUSINESS!
BUT YOU INVOKED THE NAME OF OUR EMPLOYER! THAT MAKES YOU KARIYA HAN HANSHI, NOT WATARI-KACHI!
AND ME, TOO, WHO TRAVELS WITH YOU!
WE HAVE TO ERASE ALL STAINS ON THE HONOR OF OUR LORD! THAT'S THE BUSHIDŌ OF A LOYAL RETAINER!
BUT.. ?!
HUH?
AND NOW, ONE OF YOU WILL TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS OUTRAGE!
WHA--?!
K- KANBEI.


ONE OF YOU WILL BECOME A ROBBER WHO ATTACKED THIS MOTHER AND DAUGHTER AND THEIR SERVANT!
YOU KILLED THEM, AND WE WITNESSED IT! YOU ATTACKED, AND WE CUT YOU DOWN! THAT STORY WILL CONVINCE THE OFFICERS AT THE NEXT WAY-STATION— CASE CLOSED!
SO WHO SHALL BE THE ROBBER?!
Y YOU GOTTA BE.
BUT...K-KANBEI-SAN! N..NOBODY'LL KNOW! W-WE JUST GOTTA MAKE IT TO KARIYA HAN!
LET US OFF! JUST THIS ONCE!
SWOOSH
AAAAH?!
CLANG


TAKE ONE EACH.
DO IT OR YOU ALL DIE!
Y YES, SIR!
YOU!
N- NO!


S-
SAVE
ME!!


SOMEBODY SAVE M-


SKUSSH
NNGAHHH!


FWHOO







AKAMA GENJŪRŌ, FORMER PALANQUIN GUARD OF MARUOKA HAN.

ON VOLUNTARY LEAVE, I NOW LIVE AS A WATARI-KACHI

YET I HAVE NEVER FORGOTTEN BUSHIDŌ AND THE WARRIOR SPIRIT!

IF IT IS NOT AN IMPOSITION, MAY I ASK YOUR NAME ..?

FORMER KŌGI KAI-SHAKUNIN, ŌGAMI ITTŌ.

I KNEW IT WAS SO! IN YEARS PAST, I HAVE SEEN YOU FROM AFAR, SIR, WHILE LEADING MY LORD'S HORSE IN EDO CASTLE!

AND I HAVE HEARD OF AKAMA GENJŪRŌ

A MASTER OF KAGE-RYŪ IN THE MARUOKA HAN PALANQUIN GUARD.

YOU FLATTER ME, SIR...AND NOW I FEAR I HAVE OFFENDED YOUR EYES. PLEASE UNDERSTAND THAT CIRCUMSTANCES LEFT ME NO CHOICE


. . . .
. . . .
ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN...
TO WHAT END?
I SEEK A DUEL.
I HAVE NO REASON TO FIGHT YOU.
YET I DO!
WHEN A WATARI-KACHI FINDS EMPLOYMENT, HE BECOMES A HANSHI.
I UNDER-STAND THAT THE TRUE BUSHI IS READY ALWAYS TO DIE TO PRESERVE HIS LORD FROM HARM. EVEN TO MERELY FORE-STALL IT


YOUR ARRIVAL HERE AT THIS MOMENT IS REASON ENOUGH
BZZZ
A SHOCKING EVENT HAS OCCURRED, FOR THE BASEST REASONS..



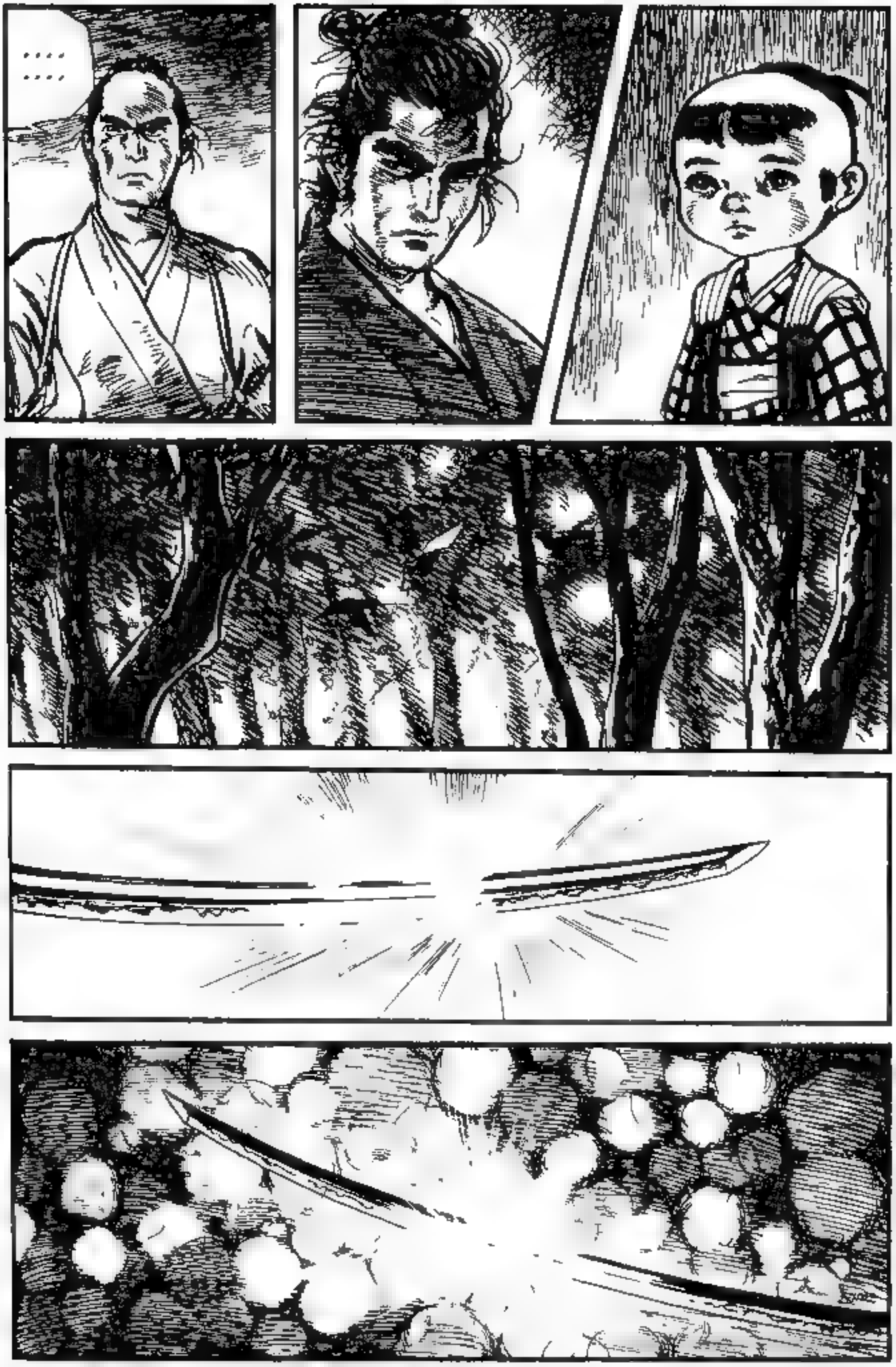

AND THUS I MUST DRAG OGAMI ODAKO INTO THIS SORDID AFFAIR, ALTHOUGH IT READS MY HEART
YOU HAVE ALREADY SEEN THESE CORPSES I HAVE NO CHOICE

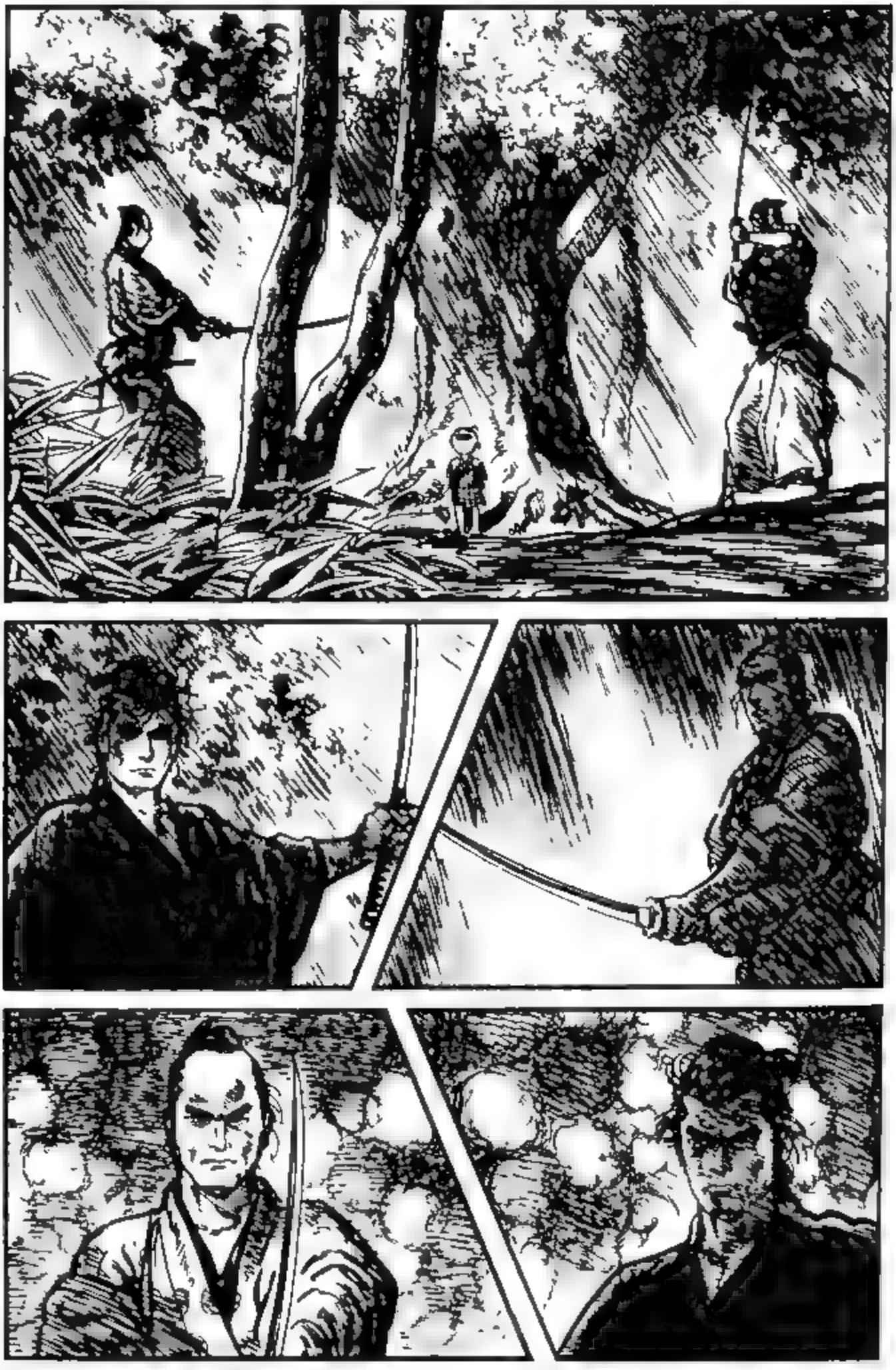

PLEASE!
....
....

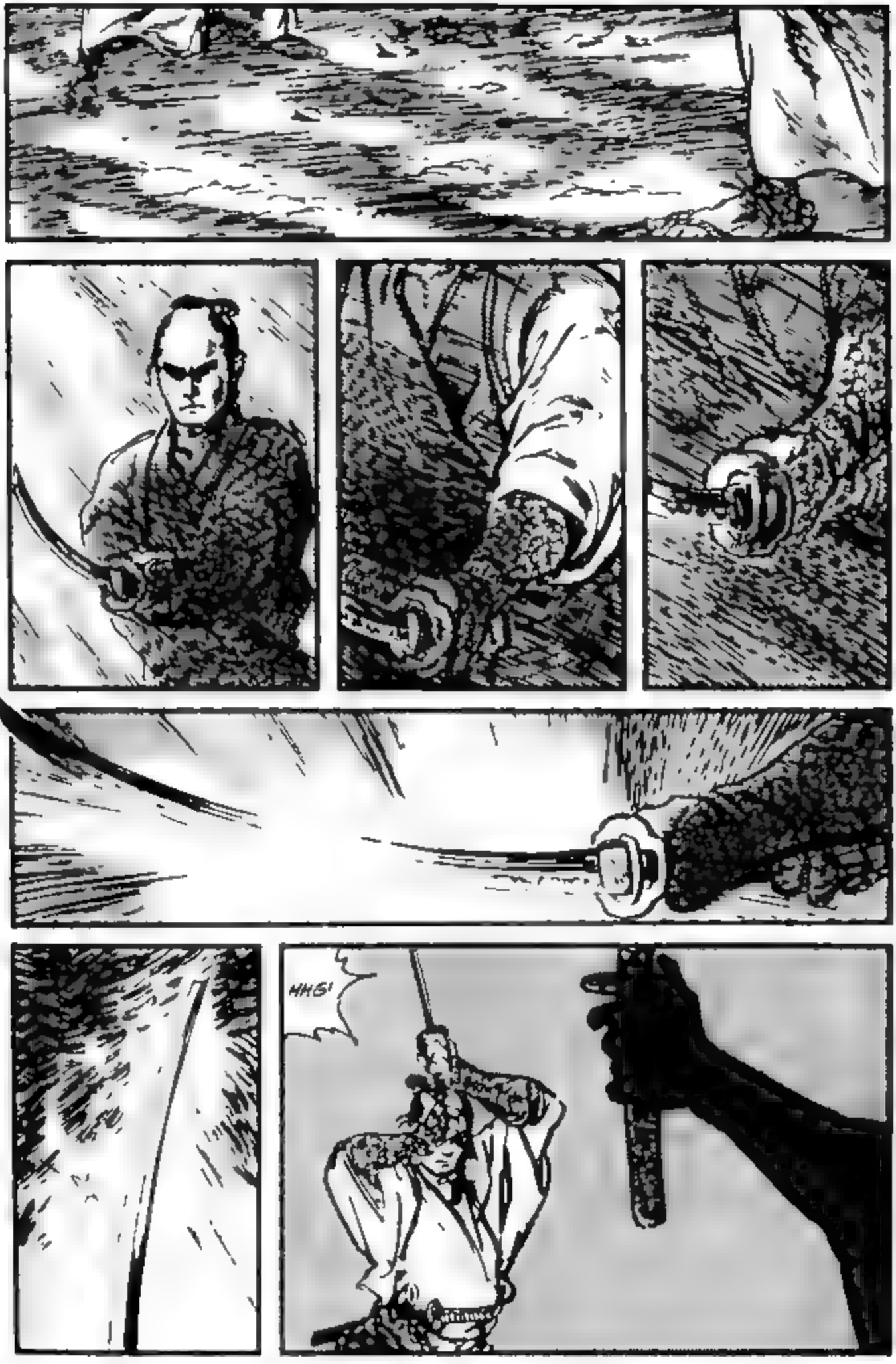

FIRST, I SHALL EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED
THAT IS UNNECESSARY
IF A BUSHI OF YOUR REPUTE INSISTS, THEN IT MUST BE FATE.
I ACCEPT
MY THANKS!




SHOULD I PREVAIL, I GIVE YOU MY WORD—
I ASK INSTEAD THAT YOU LEAVE HIM BEHIND YOU. FATHER AND SON..
—I WILL PROTECT YOUR CHILD WITH MY LIFE.
...WE LIVE IN MEIFUMADŌ, ACCEPTING THE TRIALS OF THE SIX PATHS AND THE FOUR LIVES





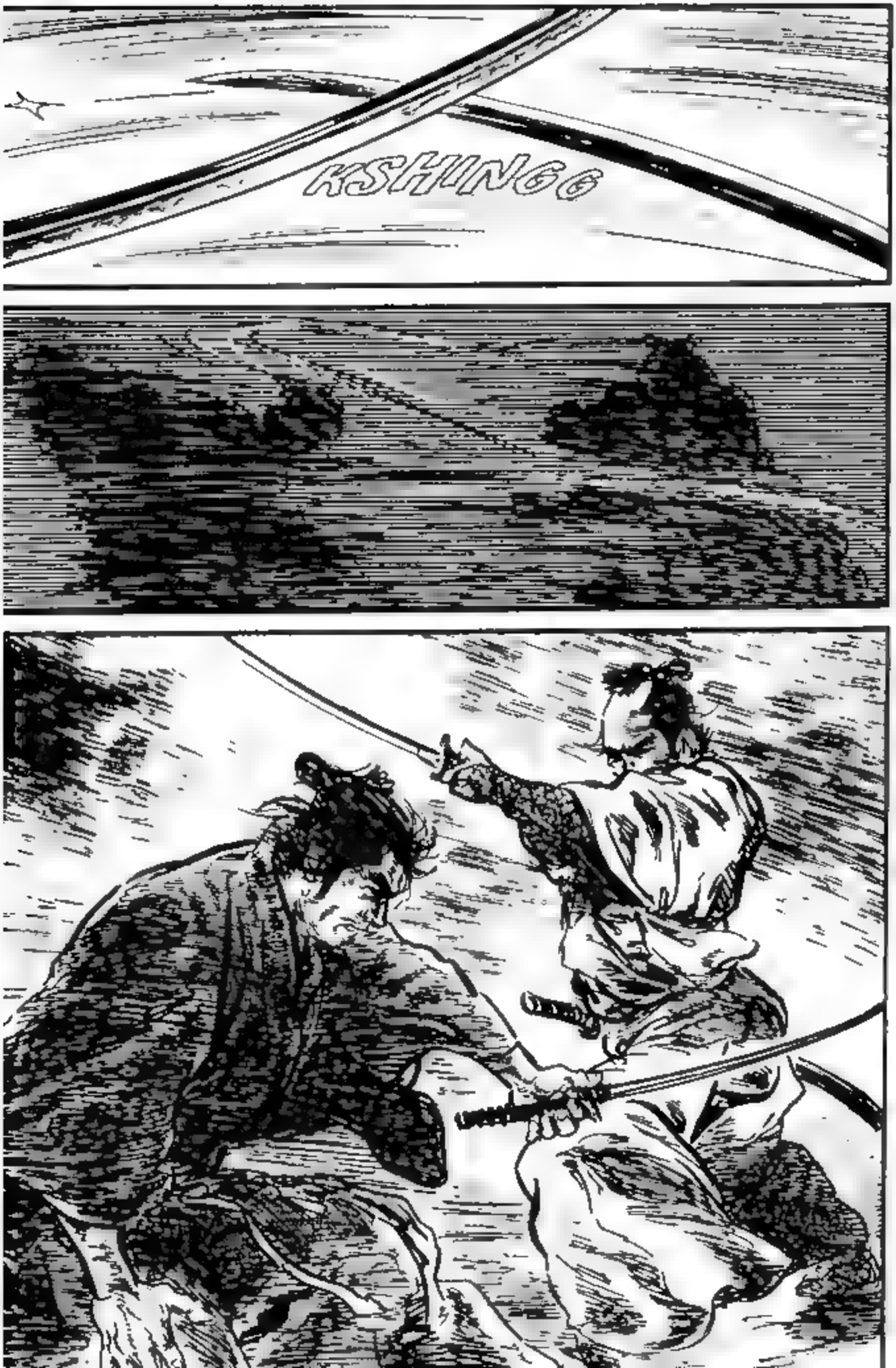

HHG!




SHANGG






KSHING6

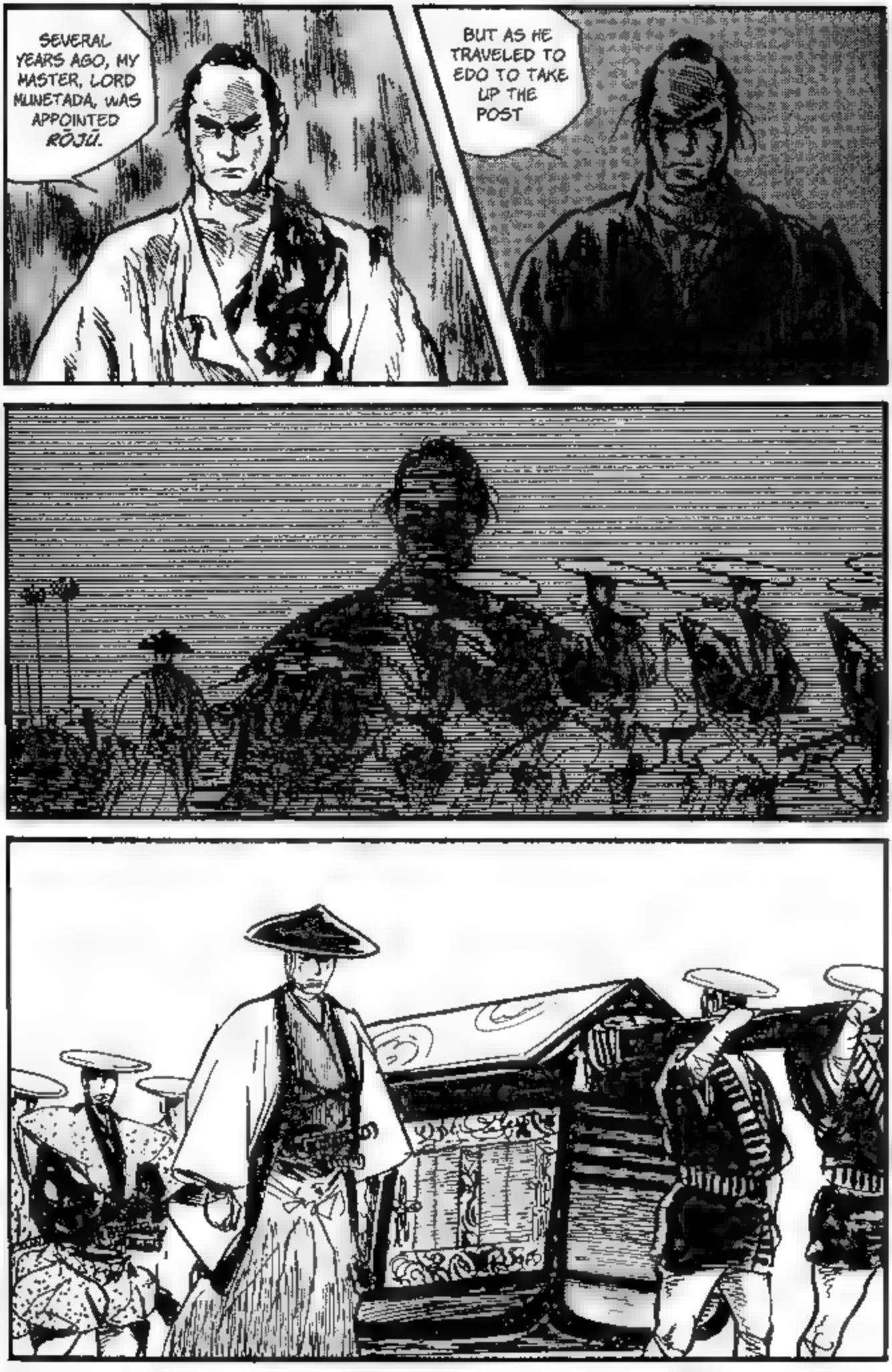

ŌGAMI-DONO! I SEEK YOUR JUDGMENT!






SPEAK!
I HAVE WALKED THE PATH OF BUSHIDŌ AS A PALANQUIN GUARD, ENTRUSTED WITH THE LIFE OF MY LORD




SEVERAL YEARS AGO, MY MASTER, LORD MUNETADA, WAS APPOINTED RŌJŪ.
BUT AS HE TRAVELED TO EDO TO TAKE UP THE POST

"WE WERE SUDDENLY BESET BY A BAND OF NAMELESS *RONIN.*

"IT WAS AN *AMBUSH,* PLANNED BY FORCES OPPOSED TO MY LORD'S APPOINTMENT

"BELIEVING THAT *OFFENSE* IS THE BEST *DEFENSE* AGAINST SUPERIOR FORCE.

"...AND HOPING TO BLUNT THE ENEMY'S MOMENTUM AND SHATTER HIS MORALE, I CHARGED INTO THEIR *MIDST!*"


MY JUDGMENT PROVED CORRECT, AND THE ASSAULT WAS REPULSED
YET THE MOOD IN THE *MAN* TURNED *AGAINST* ME!


HOW DARE I CHARGE?!, THEY SAID. A TRUE BUSHI WOULD STAY AT THE PALANQUIN'S SIDE TO PROTECT OUR LORD!
OVERCONFIDENCE IN MY SWORD HAD LED ME TO FLAUNT MY SKILL AND BREAK THE WARRIOR'S CODE!
I BELIEVED THAT IF I STAYED BY THE PALANQUIN, WE WOULD BE SURROUNDED, AND THE BATTLE LOST...AND SO I TOOK THE FIGHT TO THE ENEMY. YET...MY CRITICS HAD A POWERFUL CASE.
I APPLIED FOR LEAVE, AND BECAME A WANDERER IN THE LAND.
BUT I HAVE NEVER STOPPED SEEKING THE ANSWER. WHAT WOULD A TRUE BUSHI HAVE DONE?!
IS IT BUSHIDŌ TO STAY BY THE PALANQUIN, EVEN IF IT COSTS THE BATTLE, AND TO DIE DEFENDING ONE'S LORD TO THE DEATH?!
DOES IT VIOLATE BUSHIDŌ TO ATTACK, CORRECTLY READING THE BATTLEFIELD, CONFIDENT OF VICTORY, AND ULTIMATELY PROTECTING ONE'S LORD?


THE ANSWER ELUDES ME. AND THUS I HAVE BECOME A LOWLY WATARI-KAGHI, ROOTLESS TO THIS DAY!
I THOUGHT THAT THIS WAY I MIGHT AGAIN FIND MYSELF DEFENDING A LORD'S PALANQUIN.
AND SO DISCOVER IN BATTLE THE ANSWER FOR WHICH I SEEK
ŌGAMI-DONO! TELL ME! WHAT IS THE PATH—
NGK!
. . . . . .
O-ŌGAMI-DONO!
WHAT IS BUSHIDŌ?!


BUSHIDŌ IS TO ALWAYS SERVE ONE'S LORD WITH DEATH IN ONE'S HEART!
THEN THEN WHAT I DID WAS
TO ATTACK, HOPING FOR VICTORY? YOUR JUDGMENT WAS RASH!
INDEED, YOU WERE OVER-CONFIDENT IN YOUR SWORD.
HRNNG. IT'S TRUE
THEN I WAS MISTAKEN ...?
I SPEAK ONLY OF THE DUTY OF A PALANQUIN GUARD THE TRUE BUSHI IS ALWAYS READY TO DIE FOR HIS LORD
AND THUS HE SERVES! TO DIE ATTACKING, TO DIE DEFENDING! THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE IN THE PURITY OF SPIRIT!

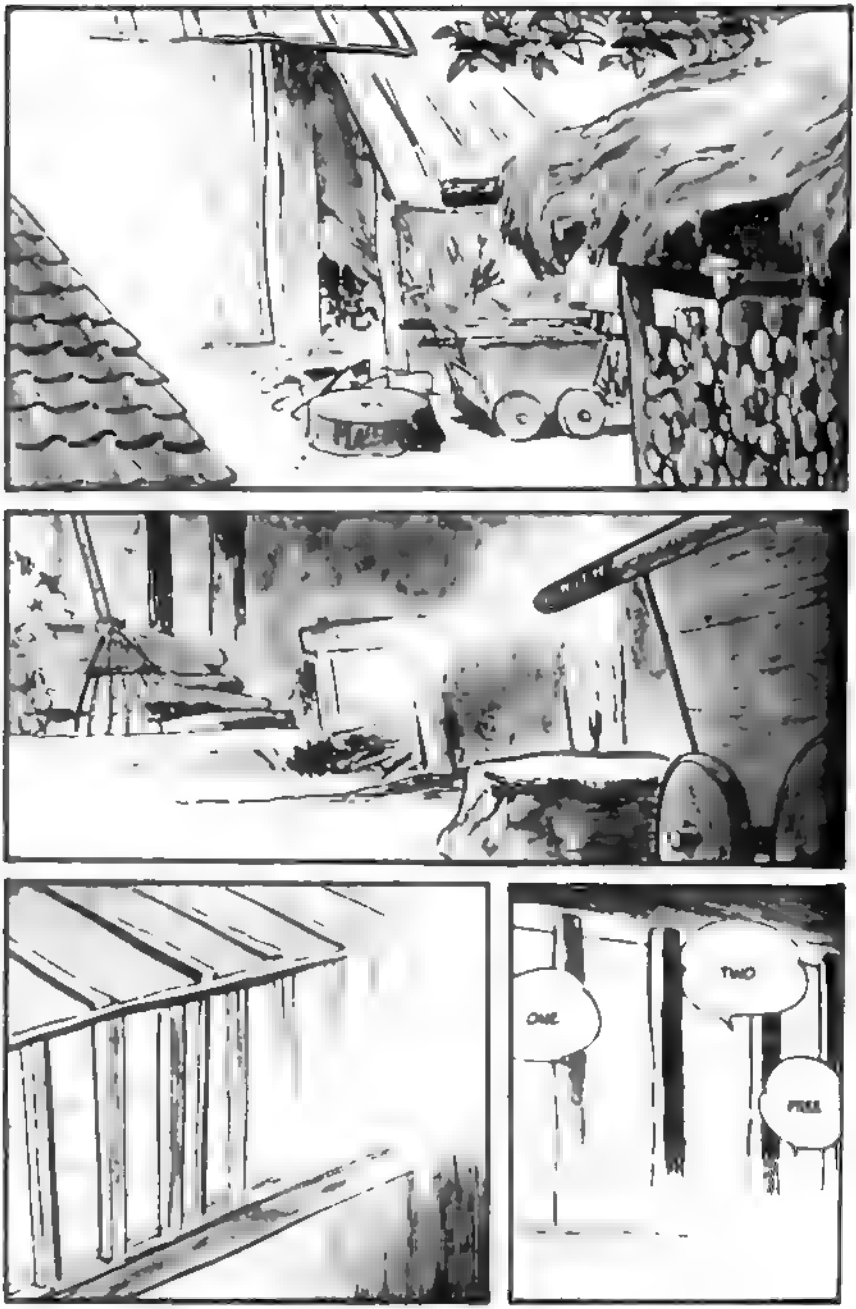

HAD I BEEN IN YOUR PLACE, I WOULD NOT HAVE STAYED BY THE PALANQUIN AND LET THE BATTLE BE LOST
I WOULD HAVE ATTACKED!
MY THANKS FOR THOSE WORDS
UHNN
A WANDERING SAMURAI

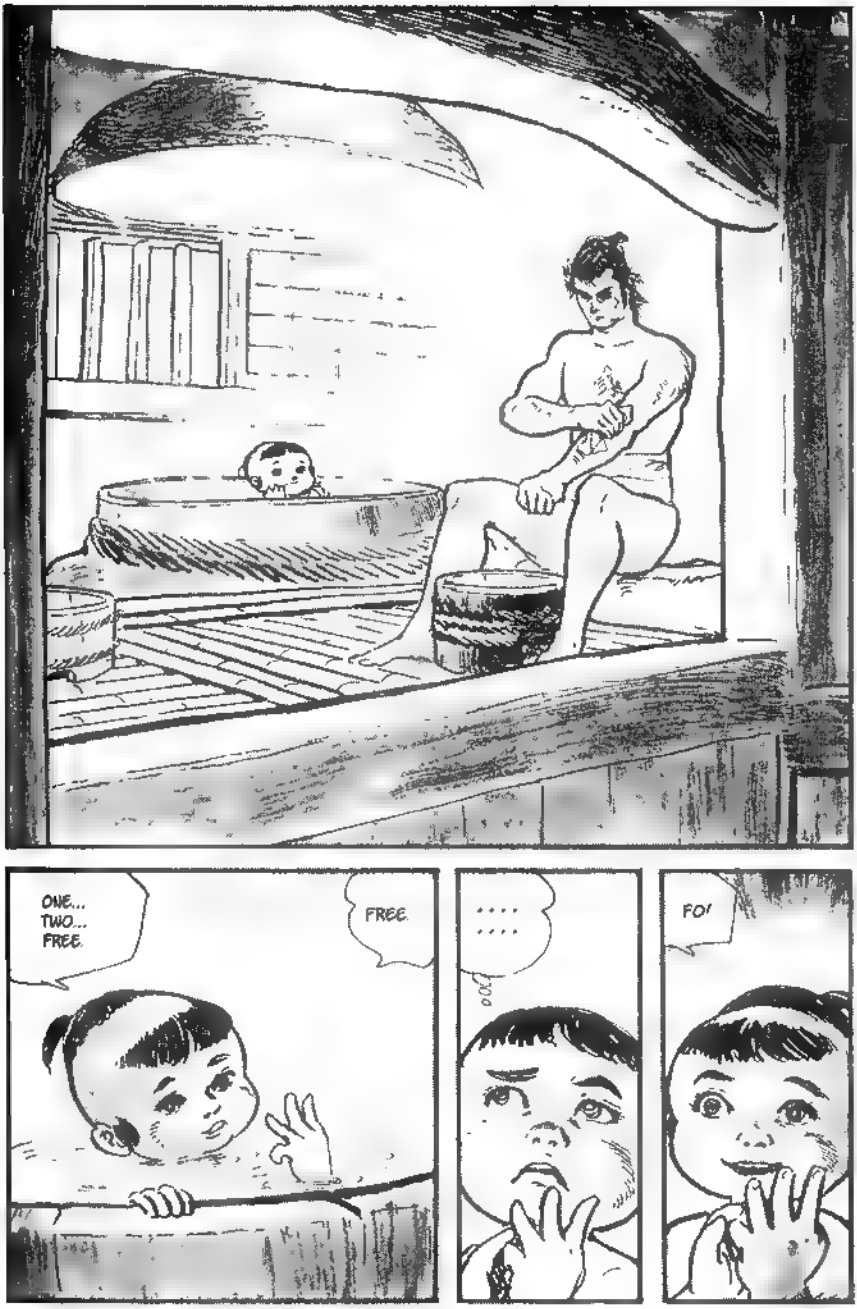


the forty-seventh

Echo of the Assassin




ONE
TWO
THREE


ONE...
TWO...
FREE.
FREE.
....
....
FO!

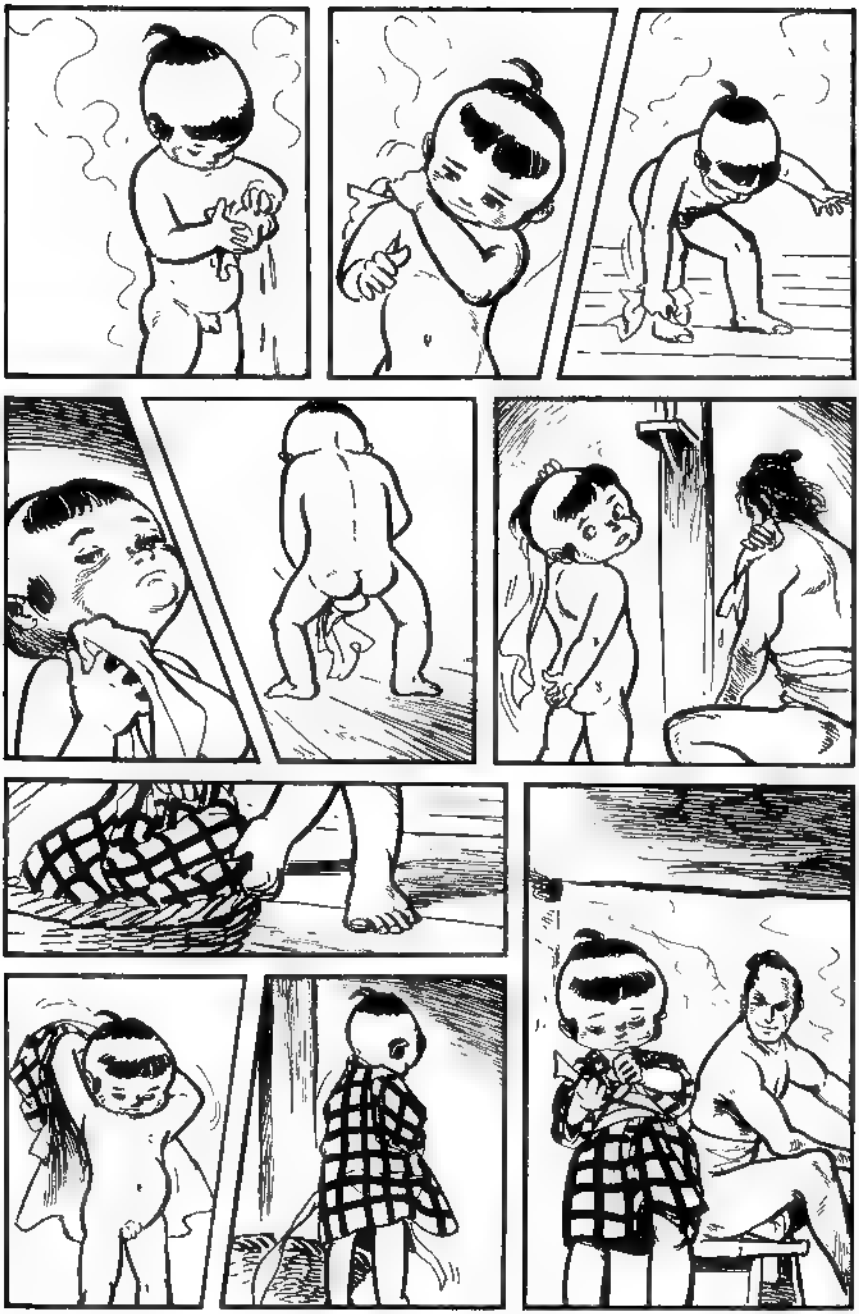

FIVE.
SIX.
SIX
SIX
. . . .
. . . .
FIVE,
SIX.
SIX.

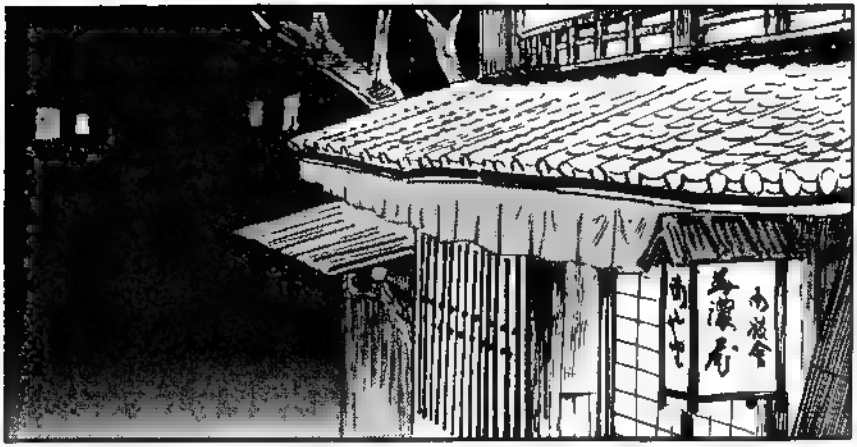

SEV'N.
EIGHT
EIGHT.
EIGHT. .
EIGHT
NINE!
NINE.
TEN!
ONE
MORE
TIME!



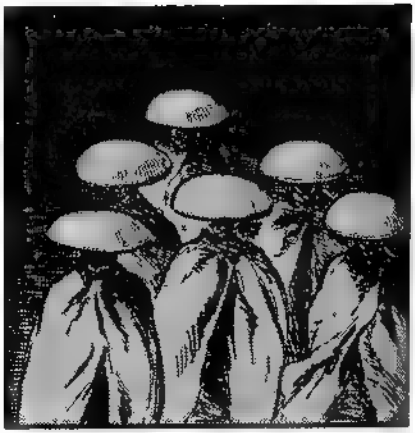

ON THE ROAD WITH YOUR BOY, ARE YOU?
THAT'S RIGHT
MY NAME'S TOYAMA KIKUMA IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE LODGING TOGETHER TONIGHT
ŌGAMI ITTŌ
AND MY ONLY SON, DAIGORO
SKSSSH
MMM..! NICE AND HOT!
JUST SOAKS THAT FATIGUE AWAY!


ONE...TEN.. FREE..
"TEN" .? THAT'S NOT RIGHT, SON!
HOW ABOUT TWO.
ONE.. TWO!
FREE.. FOUR..
FIVE.. SIX..
SEV'N...
EIGHT.. NINE...
TEN!
YES! YOU DID IT!
GOOD BOY!

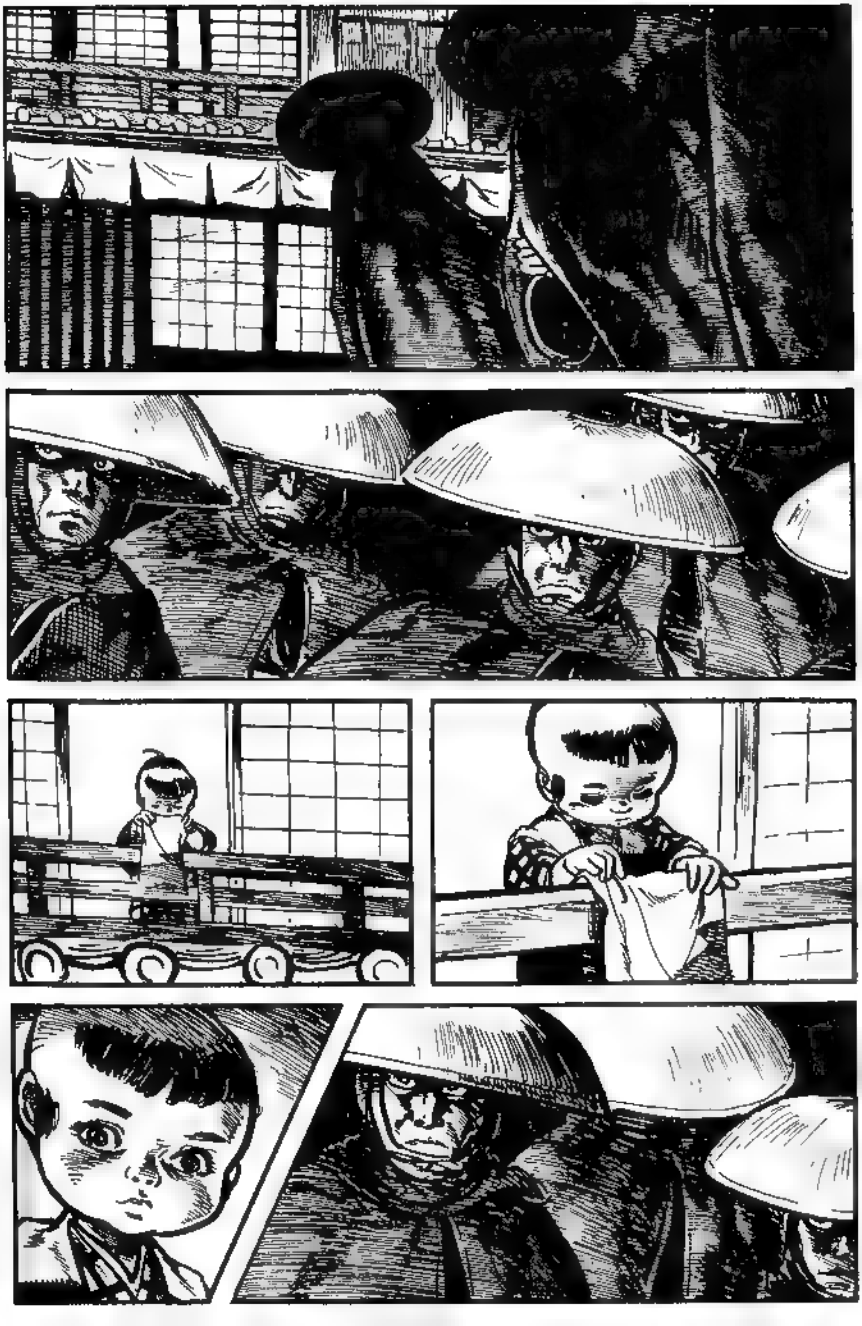


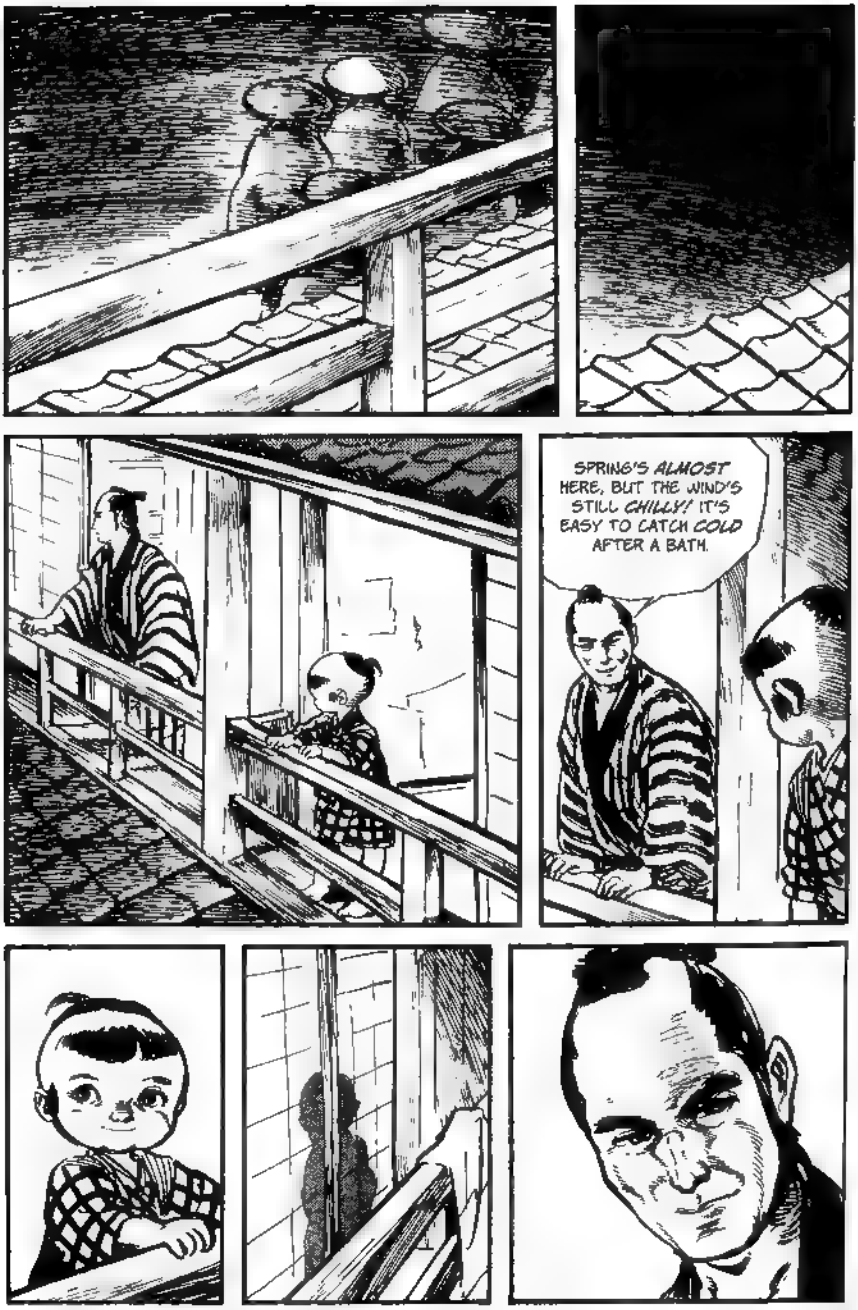

布施令
善濃府





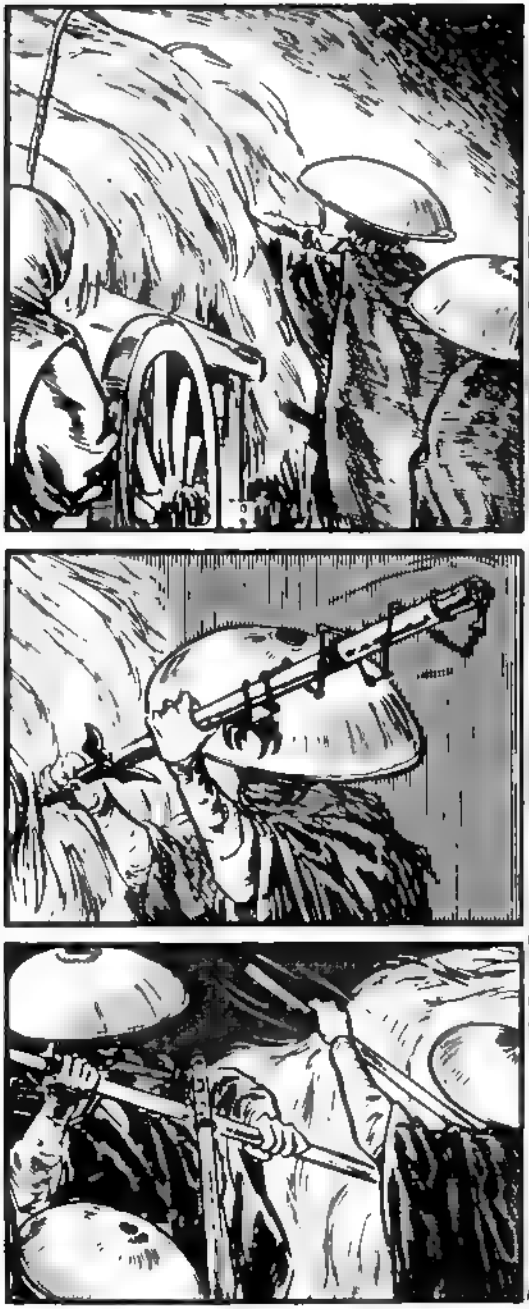





SPRING'S ALMOST HERE, BUT THE WIND'S STILL CHILLY! IT'S EASY TO CATCH COLD AFTER A BATH.







THIS WEAPON IS KNOWN AS THE *KUSARI-GAMA* THE "BREAST CUTTER" BECAUSE IT IS FOUR *SHAKU* IN LENGTH—AS TALL AS A PERSON'S BREAST MADE OF OAK, WITH A TWO-PRONGED IRON SLEEVE AT MID-STAFF FOR CATCHING AND SNAPPING SWORD BLADES, AND A STAR-SHAPED THROWING CLAW ATTACHED BY A LENGTHY CHAIN. A DEADLY WEAPON ADAPTED TO BOTH OFFENSE AND DEFENSE AND FAVORED BY *NINJA* SINCE THE *SENGOKU* ERA OF WARRING STATES.


SPREAD OUT!


KLOP
KLOP


DEAR, DEAR!
I CAN'T BELIEVE I FORGOT T! GOT TO GO BACK!
EH HEH HEH! LEFT SOMETHING BEHIND!
EXCUSE ME!


THERE'S A BAND OF STRANGE MEN, HIDING IN THE GROVE.
TWO IN THE BRANCHES, TWO BEHIND TREES, AT LEAST TWO MORE, FLAT ON THE GROUND
BE CAREFUL. IF YOU'RE THEIR TARGET, I'LL BE GLAD TO GIVE YOU BACKUP
NO STAY OUT OF IT
.....
.....



SKLSSH
NNG!

FWOO
WHOO
THPP


GCHOK
GLKK!
KSHA
DAIGORO!
PAPA!


SPANGG
SKSSSH
GAHH

WSSSH
KLAK
SPLAT


KRAKK
GHFF!
WKK
WKK
WKK
WKK


FWKK
FWKK
SHKK
SHKK

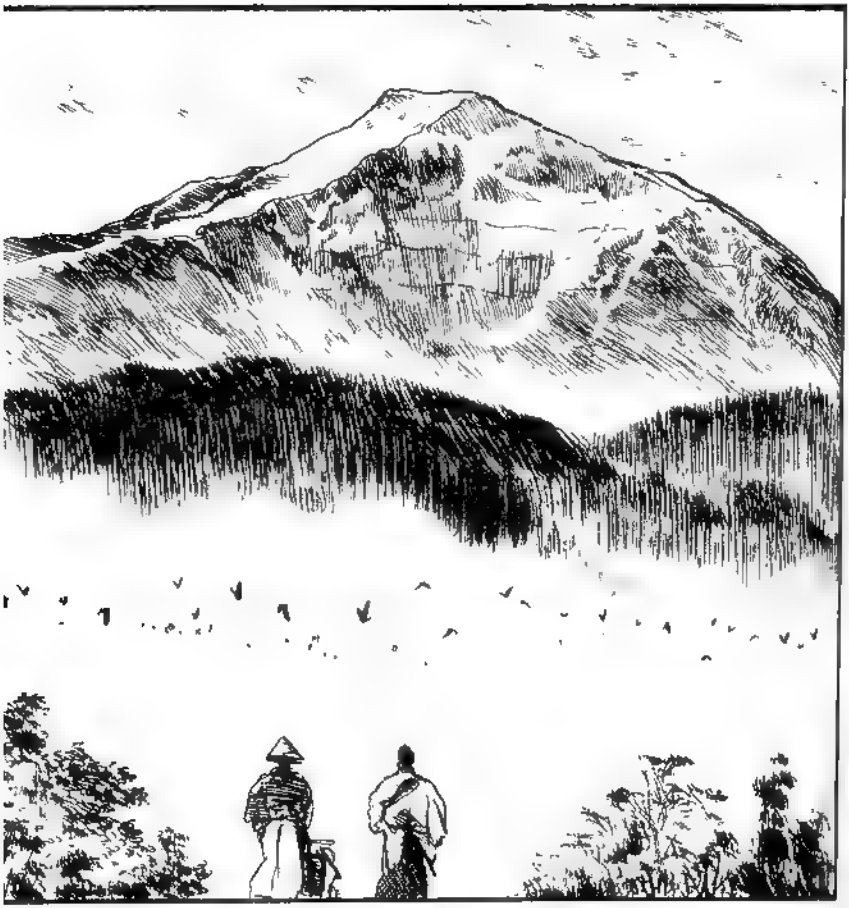

KIAAA
.....!
WHO IN THE NAME OF GOD ARE THEY?!
WHAT IS THAT BIZARRE WEAPON?
I TOLD YOU TO STAY OUT OF IT
BUT I HAD TO HELP! YOU AND YOUR BOY WERE IN DANGER! WHO... WHO ON EARTH ARE YOU THAT SUCH MEN ATTACK YOU?!
ŌGAMI ITTŌ, FORMER KŌGI KAISHAKUNIN! MY SON, DAIGORO! WE WALK THE DEMON PATH OF ASSASSINATION AS LONE WOLF AND CUB!
LONE WOLF ...?


GATA
GATA
GATA
GATA
GATA
IS IT REALLY OKAY? JUST LEAVING THEM LIKE THAT ?


WE SHOULD REPORT IT TO THE OFFICIALS AT THE NEXT MARKET TOWN OR WAY STATION.
. . . .
. . . .
MY GOD TO THINK THAT YOU'RE LONE WOLF AND CUB!
IT'S AWFUL! JUST AWFUL!
YOU AN ASSASSIN?! WITH A WONDERFUL LITTLE BOY LIKE HIM?
ACCEPTING MONEY FOR KILLING PEOPLE ?
I TOLD YOU TO STAY OUT OF IT!


I CAN'T DO THAT, SIR--I'VE KILLED A MAN! I'M REPORTING IT TO THE PROPER AUTHORITIES!
IT'S NOT YOUR CONCERN! AND BY NOW THE BODIES ARE GONE!
I TOLD YOU NOT TO GET INVOLVED!
OH. I SEE SO THAT'S IT THOSE MEN BACK THERE WERE FROM A SPECIAL OUTFIT O-NIWABAN, I IMAGINE. MOST LIKELY, KUROKUWA?
SURE, I'M JUST A SMALL FISH, BUT I STILL WORK FOR THE SHŌGUNATE! SO EVEN I KNOW THAT MUCH, SIR!
....
....


AND I'VE HEARD RUMORS ABOUT *LONE WOLF AND CUB*, TOO! IN FACT, I THINK I'VE EVEN HEARD OF *ŌGAMI ITTŌ-DONO* SOMEWHERE BEFORE.
YES! THAT'S IT! YOU HAD SOME *TROUBLE* WITH THE *YAGYŪ!!*
TOYAMA-DONO, YOU SAID?
YES. HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF *TOYAMA GEN'I*?
GEN'I-DONO OF THE KOSHIKAWA HOSPITAL?
THAT'S MY *DAD*. I'M HIS SECOND OLDEST SON. AND A *DOCTOR*, TOO. WELL, ALMOST
EVERYONE SAYS MY FATHER'S A GENIUS, BUT I'M NOT EVEN CLOSE. I'M STILL IN TRAINING.
. . . . . .




THAT'S WHY I'M TRAVELING, IN FACT FOR MEDICINAL PLANTS! I'M GOING TO GATHER IBUKI BOFU!
.....


IT LOOKS SORT OF LIKE A CARROT, BUT IT'S GREAT FOR SOUT, HELPS DIGESTION, BRINGS DOWN FEVER, EVEN CURES COLDS
YOU PICK THE ROOTS IN APRIL AND MAY, SECOND-YEAR GROWTH. DISCARD THE STEM, WASH IN FRESH WATER, AND DRY IN THE SUN.
AS YOU CAN GUESS FROM THE NAME, YOU FIND IT UP THERE, ON THE FLANKS OF MOUNT IBUKI.






WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS PATH OF SLAUGHTER?
. . . . .
. . . . .


WELL, WHATEVER REASONS YOU HAD, THEY'RE YOURS AND NO ONE ELSE'S! CERTAINLY YOUR BOY COULDN'T CARE LESS! YOU MAY BE HIS FATHER, BUT THAT DOESN'T GIVE YOU THE RIGHT TO DRAG AN INNOCENT LITTLE CHILD THROUGH THE MUD!
SO WHAT IF YOU'RE BOUND BY BLOOD? YOU'RE STILL INDIVIDUALS—YOU LIVE YOUR OWN LIVES.
ISN'T THAT SO?!
JUST BECAUSE YOU'VE EATEN DOESN'T MEAN YOUR BOY HAS A FULL TUMMY
JUST BECAUSE YOU SLEPT WELL DOESN'T MEAN HE ISN'T SLEEPY


LIKE THEY SAY, WE SHIT AND PISS ALONE, SIR!
THE MOMENT WE'RE BORN, WE HAVE OUR OWN PERSONALITIES. OUR OWN RIGHT TO LIFE!
NO FATHER CAN STRIP THAT AWAY FROM HIS CHILD! IT'S UNFORGIVABLE!
. . . .
. . . .
ARE YOU EVEN LISTENING TO ME?
SAY SOMETHING, FOR GOD'S SAKE!
A FEW HOURS AGO YOU THREW YOUR DAGGER AND KILLED A HUMAN BEING


BY YOUR OWN ARGUMENT, YOU STOLE THAT MAN'S RIGHT TO LIFE.
IF YOU HAD BEEN ATTACKED, IF IT WAS KILL OR BE KILLED, THAT'S ONE THING. BUT INSTEAD
WHAT DID YOU SAY?!
YOU! A FATHER AND SON! YOU WERE UNDER ATTACK BY MYSTERIOUS ASSAILANTS!


I WITNESSED IT!
YOU DON'T JUST WATCH A CHILD DROWNING IN THE RIVER! ANYONE WOULD HAVE HELPED!
ALTHOUGH TO BE HONEST, SIR, IF YOUR CHILD HADN'T BEEN THERE, MAYBE I WOULDN'T HAVE.
BEGGING YOUR PARDON, BUT WHO WOULD WANT TO GET MIXED UP WITH SOME SCRUFFY RŌNIN AND A BUNCH OF MYSTERY KILLERS?
I DID IT BECAUSE OF HIM, AND THAT'S EXACTLY MY POINT! IT ISN'T JUST YOUR PROBLEM ANYMORE! WHEN YOU DRAG YOUR BOY ONTO THE BATTLEFIELD, YOU'RE GOING TO INVOLVE OTHER INNOCENT PEOPLE!


THIS SWEET LITTLE CHILD
ANY-ONE WHO SAW HIM WOULD...
DON'T YOU LOVE YOUR SON?
DO YOU EVEN THINK ABOUT HIS FUTURE?


AS A FATHER AS A HUMAN BEING! THE PATH YOU'RE ON IS HERESY! YOU CAN'T SACRIFICE YOUR CHILD FOR YOUR OWN HATRED!
IF YOU HAVE TO WALK YOUR ROAD OF SLAUGHTER, WALK IT ALONE!
. . . . . .
YOU SHOULD SET HIM FREE.
WE CHOSE THIS ROAD TOGETHER, FATHER AND SON. WE LIVE IN MEIFUMADŌ, ACCEPTING THE SUFFERING OF THE SIX PATHS AND THE FOUR LIVES.
YOU COULD NEVER UNDERSTAND.


YOU SAY HE CHOSE? HIMSELF? ABSURD . !
ENOUGH QUESTIONS.
. . . .
. . . .
I GOT M.XED UP WITH YOU TWO, AND I WOUND UP KILLING SOMEONE ME, A DOCTOR .
I THINK I DESERVE BETTER THAN "ENOUGH QUESTIONS"
THEN . I ACCEPT YOUR FEEL-INGS WITH GRATITUDE.


I SEE. WELL, LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING. WHEN I WAS LITTLE, I DIDN'T WANT TO BE A DOCTOR. I DREAMED OF BEING SOME AMAZING BUSHI! I FLUNG MYSELF INTO MARTIAL ARTS, DAY AND NIGHT. BUT THAT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE EVER USED THEM.
YET ISN'T TAKING A MAN'S LIFE, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES-
I SAID NO MORE QUES-TIONS!
SO BE IT


BUT AT LEAST REMEMBER THIS
MAYBE I'M STILL INTERFERING, BUT
THERE'S A PERENNIAL CALLED KAKIDŌSHI— ITS MEDICAL NAME IS RENSEN-SŌ.
THIS TIME OF YEAR IT PUTS OUT PALE PURPLE FLOWERS
PERHAPS AROUND HERE.
AH— THERE'S ONE!


THIS IS *EXCELLENT* WHEN CHILDREN GET COLICKY
DRY IT IN A SHADED PLACE, WITH A GOOD BREEZE, AND GRIND IT FINE. THE POWDER WILL KEEP ITS HEALING POWERS FOR MANY YEARS
AND LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT AN EXCELLENT COAGULANT
IT'S A PALE WHITE MUSHROOM CALLED *ONIFUSUBE*
IF YOU SPOT ONE, *POUNCE* ON IT. THERE'S *NOTHING* BETTER FOR STAUNCHING BLEEDING.
I'M NOT TELLING YOU THESE THINGS FOR *YOUR* BENEFIT. IT'S FOR THE *BOY*
.....
.....


HERE- I ALMOST FORGOT SOME TEA, PERHAPS?
AND IT'S HOT!
THIS IS MY OWN INVENTION
TAKE TWO NESTING SECTIONS OF BAMBOO, PACK THE GAP WITH CLAY
. AND YOU CAN HAVE HOT TEA WHENEVER YOU WANT!


KLONK


HEH HEH HEH. NO SWORDS NEEDED! INGRATIATE YOUR WAY INTO YOUR OPPONENT'S HEART, WIN HIS TRUST AND THEN TAKE HIM OUT!
I PLANNED IT ALL—THE KUROKUWA AMBUSH, EVEN KILLING ONE OF THEM MYSELF, ALL TO TRAP YOU! THE YAGYŪ SHINKAGE SCHOOL OF YAMABIKO! THE ASSASSIN'S ECHO!


WHAT NOW, ŌGAMI ITTŌ?!
AFTER DRINKING MY TEA LACED WITH KIRENGETSU-TSUJI AND TORIKABUTO POISON, YOU'RE FINISHED EVEN A SINGLE DROP CAN SEND YOU TO THE OTHER SIDE!
MEH HEH HEH HEH!
YAGYŪ CLAN YAMABIKO, TOYAMA KIKUMA! I TAKE YOUR LIFE!


AH!
H-HOW ...?!
PTEW!
IM-IM-POSSIBLE! HOW DID YOU-
THE YAGYŪ ARE A CLAN OF ASSASSINS!
THEY'LL STOOP TO ANYTHING TO KILL THEIR ENEMIES. HOW MANY HIGH OFFICIALS HAVE DIED OF YOUR POISONS ALREADY ?
BUT . WHY WOULD YOU
I REMEMBERED, WHEN YOU STARTED TALKING ABOUT HERBS, THAT THERE'S A BRANCH OF THE YAGYŪ CALLED THE HYAKUSŌ-GUMI THE HUNDRED GRASSES! AND THAT THEY PRACTICE THE ART OF YAMABIKO!


YOU WERE A LITTLE TOO QUICK AT THE END, DON'T YOU THINK?
YOU SHOULD HAVE WAITED FOR THE ECHO BEFORE YOU GLOATED!
AHH!
WSHHH
KLANGG


SHINGG
SLICCH
NEGK !

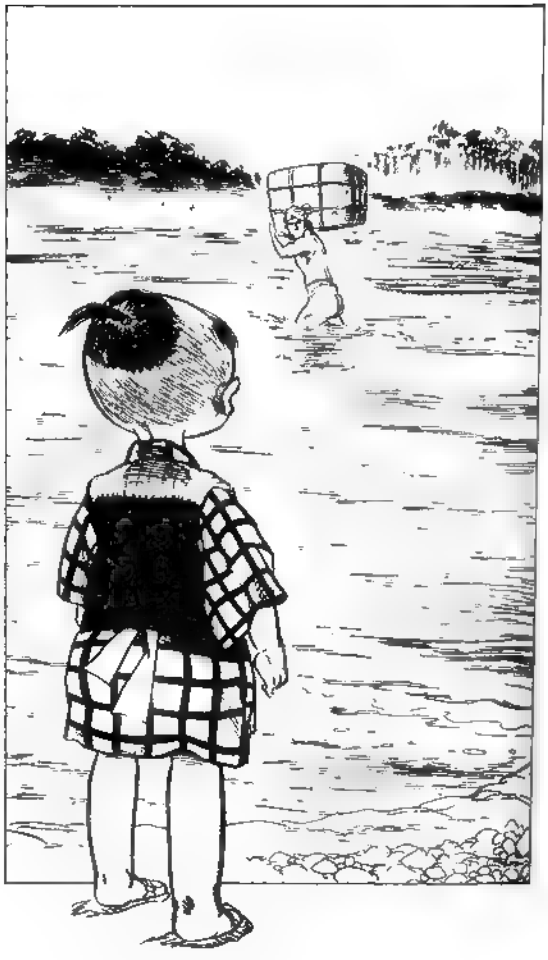

FWOO
I I WASN'T LYING.
YES. I WANTED YOU TO TRUST ME, BUT .MY WORDS.. ALL TRUE!
I WORRY FOR YOUR BOY AFTER YOU'RE GONE .AS ONE HUMAN BEING FOR ANOTHER.
I I TRULY WANTED TO BE A DOCTOR!
BUT I WAS BORN YAGYU SO IT WASN'T TO BE.
HEH. A MAN'S LIFE. A BITTER JOKE.
I'LL TEACH YOU ONE LAST THING.
EAT THAT KAKIDŌSHI


IT .IT'S AN ANTIDOTE EVEN SPITTING OUT . THE TEA..
THE POISONS WILL..

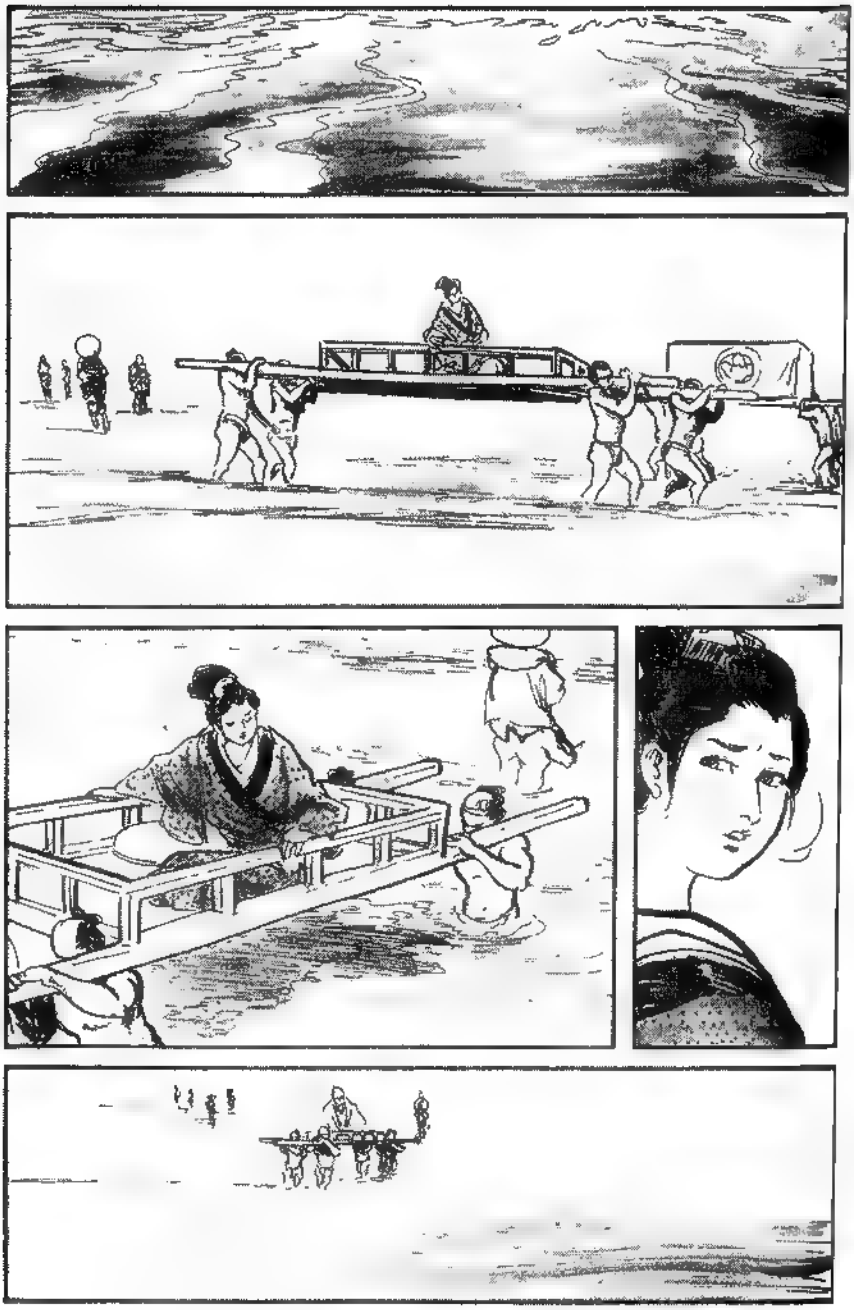


the forty-eighth

Naked Worms







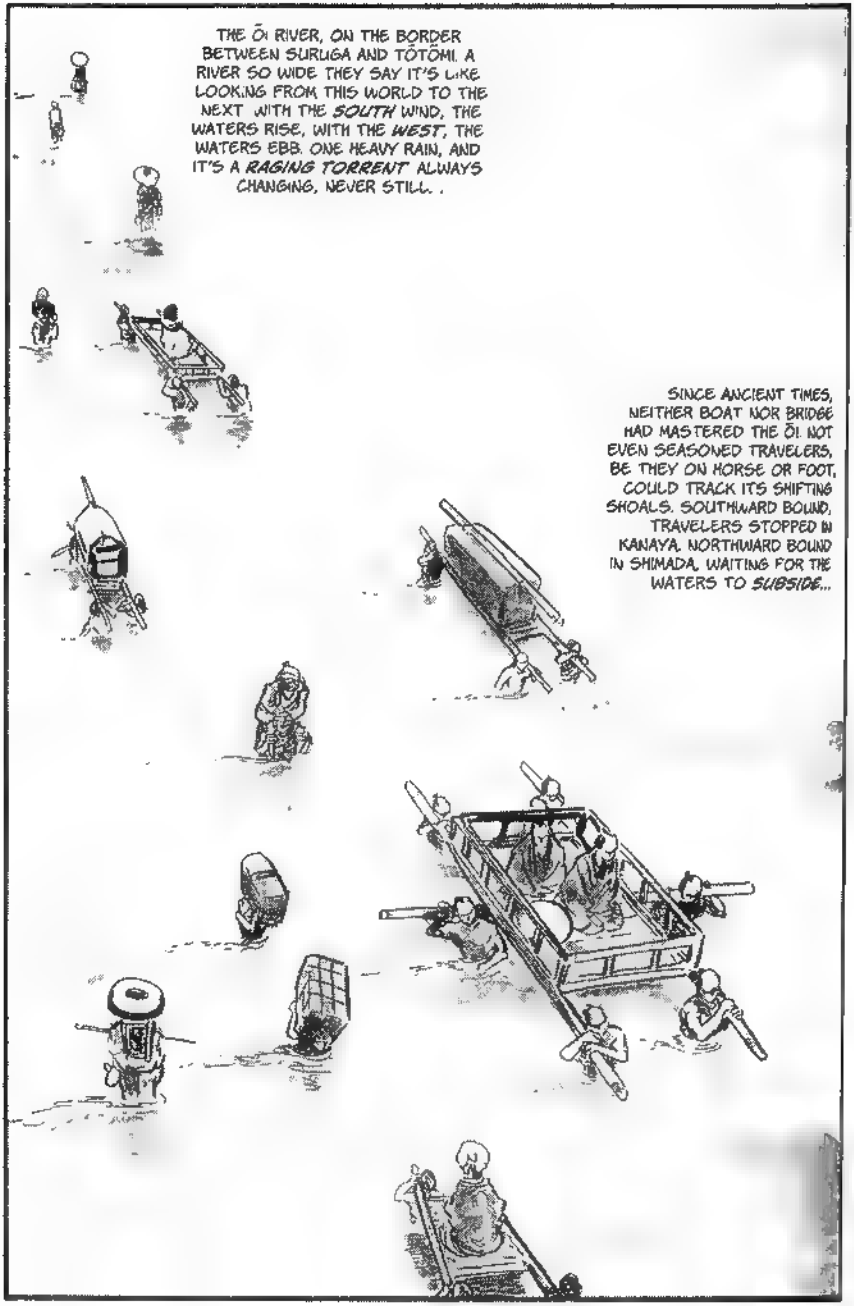



EH HEH HEH. HEY, GO-SHINZO-SAN! IT'S DAMN DANGEROUS T' KNEEL ON THE RENDAI! YA BETTER CROSS THEM LEGS!
IF YER LEGS FALL ASLEEP AND SOMETHIN' HAPPENS, Y' COULD DROWN! SEE? MAKE YERSELF COMFY, THAT'S HOW YA CROSS A RIVER.


FIRST TIME ON A RENDAI, I BETCHA?
SO YA BETTER LISTEN TO US!
B-BUT IT'S NOT
OOPSIE! I'M SLIPPIN'!
OH?!
HUP! HO! WHOOPS!
I'LL. I'LL.
GIVE YOU DRINKING MONEY!
THAT'S RIGHT GENEROUS MA'AM, AND I'M SURE YA WILL. BUT IF YA DON'T CROSS THEM LEGS RIGHT QUICK DUNNO F WE KIN GET YA TO THE OTHER SIDE!

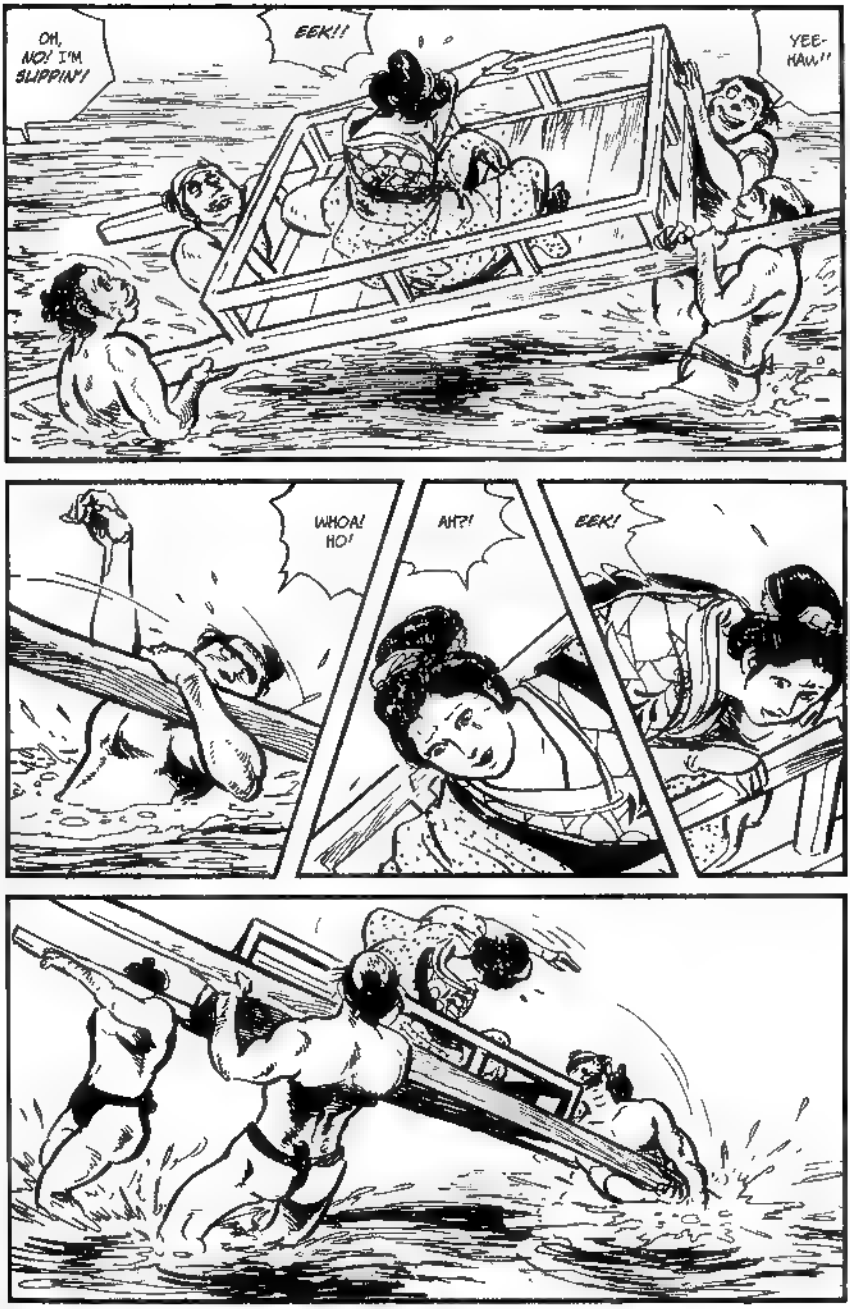

UHOA! UH-OH!
EEK!!
YEAH! THERE YA GO!
NOW S-STOP IT!
IT'S... DAMAR-OUS!


C'MON, GO-SHINZO-SAN! SPREAD 'EM SO WE CAN SEE SOME HAIR UP THERE!
WH- WHAT ?!
HEH HEH. WE HADAKA-MUSHI GOT OUR RIGHTS, SEE?
THE RIVER GOT ITS WAYS .WOMEN WHAT KNOW 'EM LET US "PRAY AT THE ALTAR" WITHOUT US EVEN ASKIN'!
Y-YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS!


THE ŌI RIVER, ON THE BORDER BETWEEN SURUGA AND TŌTŌMI. A RIVER SO WIDE THEY SAY IT'S LIKE LOOKING FROM THIS WORLD TO THE NEXT. WITH THE *SOUTH* WIND, THE WATERS RISE, WITH THE *WEST*, THE WATERS EBB. ONE HEAVY RAIN, AND IT'S A *RAGING TORRENT*. ALWAYS CHANGING, NEVER STILL. .
SINCE ANCIENT TIMES, NEITHER BOAT NOR BRIDGE HAD MASTERED THE ŌI. NOT EVEN SEASONED TRAVELERS, BE THEY ON HORSE OR FOOT, COULD TRACK ITS SHIFTING SHOALS. SOUTHWARD BOUND, TRAVELERS STOPPED IN KANAYA. NORTHWARD BOUND IN SHIMADA, WAITING FOR THE WATERS TO *SUBSIDE*...


WHAT'S GOING ON OVER THERE? IS MY WIFE IN TROUBLE?! HURRY!!
NAW, SIR. SHE'S IN GOOD HANDS!
AND WE IS GOIN' AS FAST AS WE KIN SIR. heh heh heh.


WHOA!
OOPS!
C'MON, GO-SHINZO-SAN!
IT DON'T WEAR OUT WITH LOOK-IN'!
DON'TCHA SHOW YOUR HUBBY EVERY NIGHT?
SHARE THE WEALTH WITH US POOR FOLK, MA AM! heh heh!
.....!
THIS IS THE WORST SPOT IN THE RIVER! WE'RE RISKIN' OUR LIVES HERE!
IT'S EASY TO SLIP, Y'KNOW. WE ALL KIN SWIM, BUT OUR POOR PASSENGERS. THEY SINK LIKE A ROCK, AND THE CURRENT TAKES 'EM!


OH, NO! I'M SLIPPIN'!
EEK!!
YEE-HAW!!
WHOA! HO!
AH?!
EEK!


SLSSHH
. . . .
. . . .
SNIFF!
WHY, HELLO!
BARELY BEEN USED! MAKES YA WANNA TAKE A BIG, JUICY BITE!
YO-HO-HO!


HEY! MY TURN!
OUR TURN!
C'MON- GET IT AROUND THIS WAY, MA'AM!
'NUFF T' MAKE A GROWN MAN CRY! HEE HEE!
YAA-HOO!
LORDY, MA'AM, YER A HAIRY ONE, AIN'T'CHA? HEE HEE!
HEY, WHY DON'TCHA LIFT UP THAT THERE LEG?!

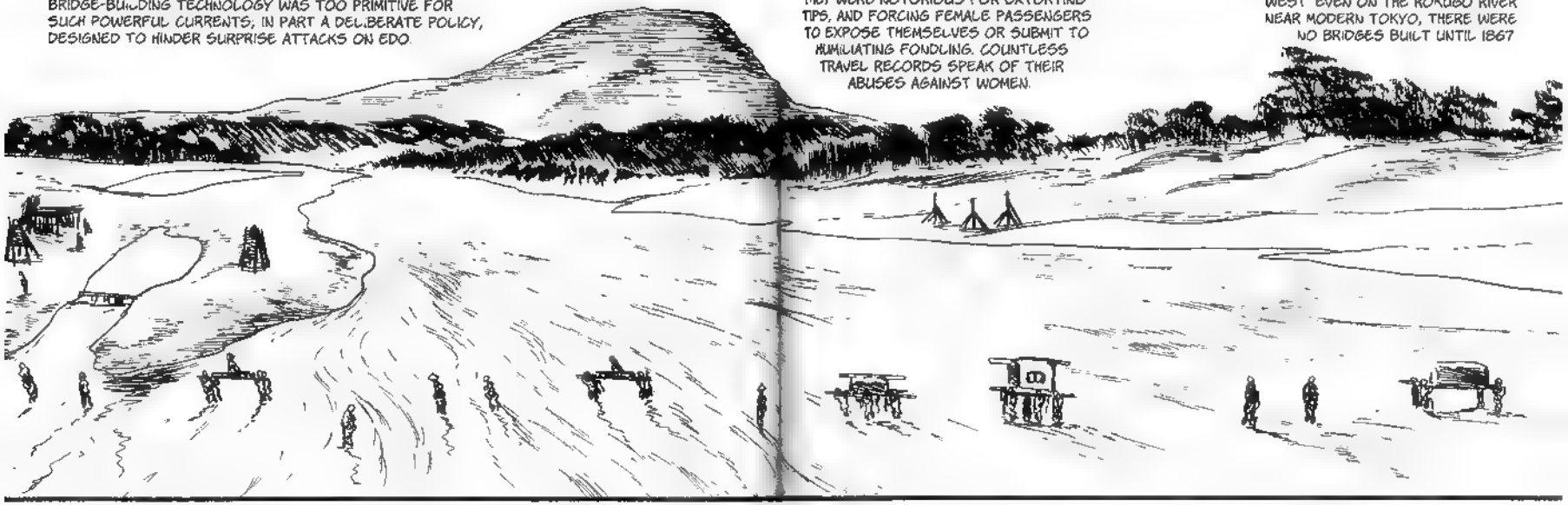

ALL RIGHT!
OH, BABY! YEAH!
BWA HAW HAW!


WHAT THE DEVIL IS GOING ON OVER THERE?!
O-SHIZU !!
HEY, CALM DOWN, PAL!
YEAH. TAKE OR LEAVE IT, TH' RIVER'S GOT ITS RULES
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, RULES?!
THAT IS A SIMPLE OUT-RAGE!
YER LITTLE LADY'S TOO PERTY FOR HER OWN GOOD!
WHOA! BETTER HOLD TIGHT!
AH?!
HAW HAW!

IN THOSE DAYS THE SHŌGUNATE MAINTAINED *SEKISHO* CHECKPOINTS ON CRITICAL THOROUGHFARES, AND RELIED ON FERRY BOATS AND RIVER LABORERS FOR CROSSING THE NATION'S MANY RIVERS. IN PART IT WAS BECAUSE BRIDGE-BUILDING TECHNOLOGY WAS TOO PRIMITIVE FOR SUCH POWERFUL CURRENTS; IN PART A DELIBERATE POLICY, DESIGNED TO HINDER SURPRISE ATTACKS ON EDO.

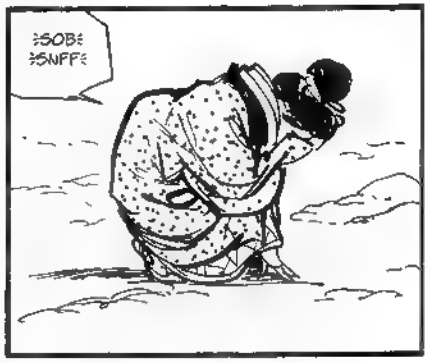
AND SO THE RIVER LABORERS BECAME THE BANE OF EVERY TRAVELER. CURSED AS *HADAKA-MUSHI*!—"NAKED WORMS"—THEY WERE NOTORIOUS FOR EXTORTING TIPS, AND FORCING FEMALE PASSENGERS TO EXPOSE THEMSELVES OR SUBMIT TO HUMILIATING FONDLING. COUNTLESS TRAVEL RECORDS SPEAK OF THEIR ABUSES AGAINST WOMEN.

THE *HADAKA-MUSHI* SYSTEM LASTED WELL INTO THE MEIJI PERIOD (1868-1892) AND JAPAN'S OPENING TO THE WEST. EVEN ON THE ROKUGŌ RIVER NEAR MODERN TOKYO, THERE WERE NO BRIDGES BUILT UNTIL 1867



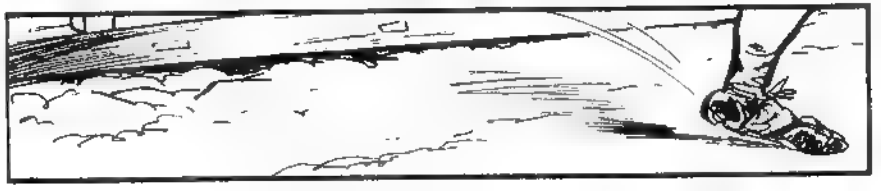






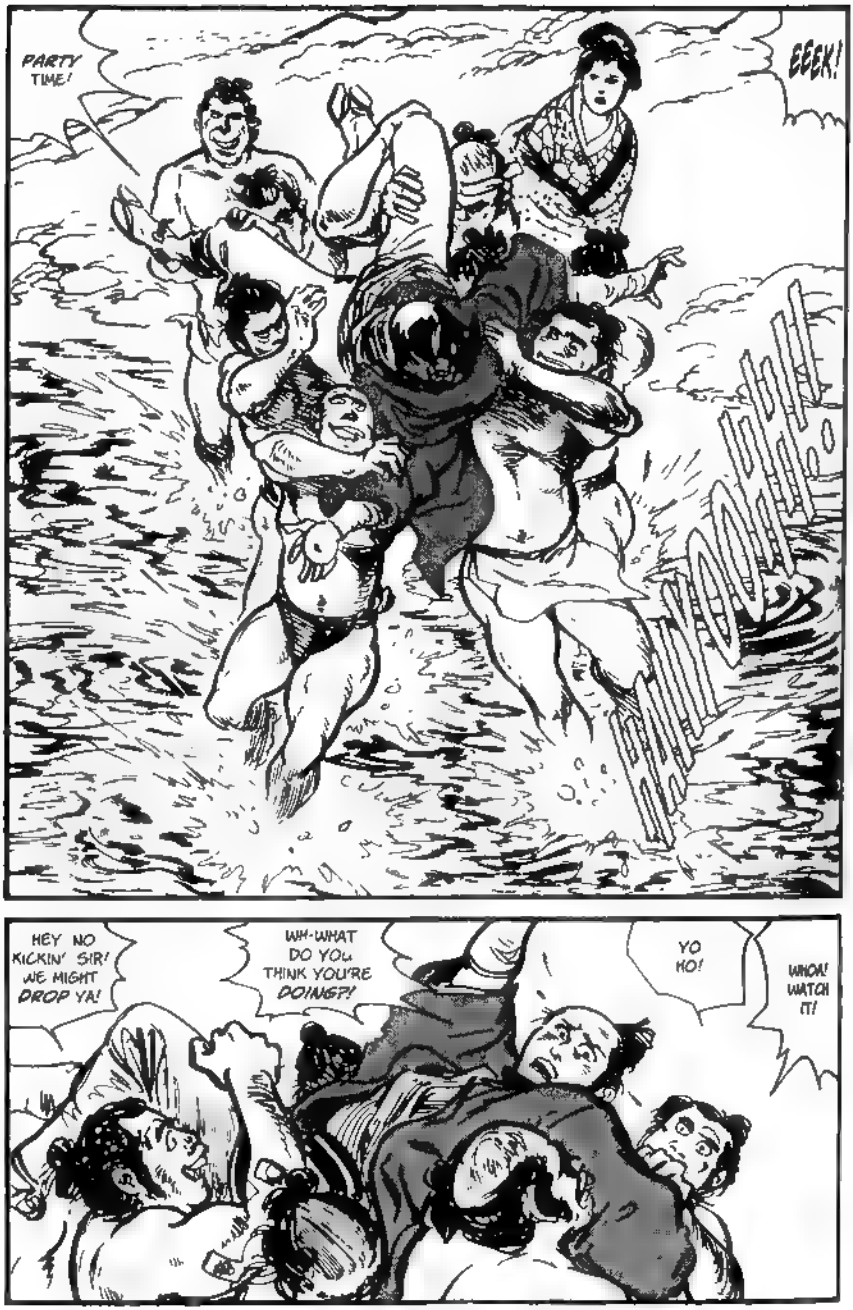







AAAH! AAHUHUH!
YOU BASTARDS!! H-HOW DARE YOU!
I'M REPORTING YOU TO THE RIVER WARDEN! YOU'LL PAY!
HEAR THAT, BOYS? HE'S GONNA REPORT US!
GO ON! HELP YER-SELF!
THE RIVER WARDEN LISTENS TO US, SEE?!
YA KNOW WHAT A RIVER WARDEN DOES?
HE MAKES SURE THE BIG SHOTS' MAIL GETS ACROSS THE RIVER IN THE GOJO-BAKO AND ON TO EDO, THAT'S WHAT!
IF HE CAN'T GET US TO TAKE IT ACROSS, THEN WHAT, HUH?


EH HEH HEH..ANY RIVER WARDEN WORTH HIS SALT KNOWS HE CAN'T PISS *US* OFF!
SO YA WANNA *REPORT?* GO FOR IT, PAL!
D-DAMN YOU! *HADAKA-MUSHI* SWINE!
YEE-HAW!
WRAK
TAKE 'IM, BOYS!
STOP IT! PUT ME *DOWN!*
HAW HAW!


PARTY TIME!
EEEK!
HEY NO KICKIN' SIR! WE MIGHT DROP YA!
WH-WHAT DO YOu THINK YOU'RE DOINGS?!
YO HO!
WHOA! WATCH IT!


BWA HAW HAW!
HEAVE HO! HEAVE HO!
HUP HO! HUP HO!
STOP IT! STOP IT, I SAY!
UH-OH! THINK I'M SLIPPIN'!
HOW 'BOUT A TIP, SIR? OR SHALL WE DUMP YA IN THE DEEPS?!

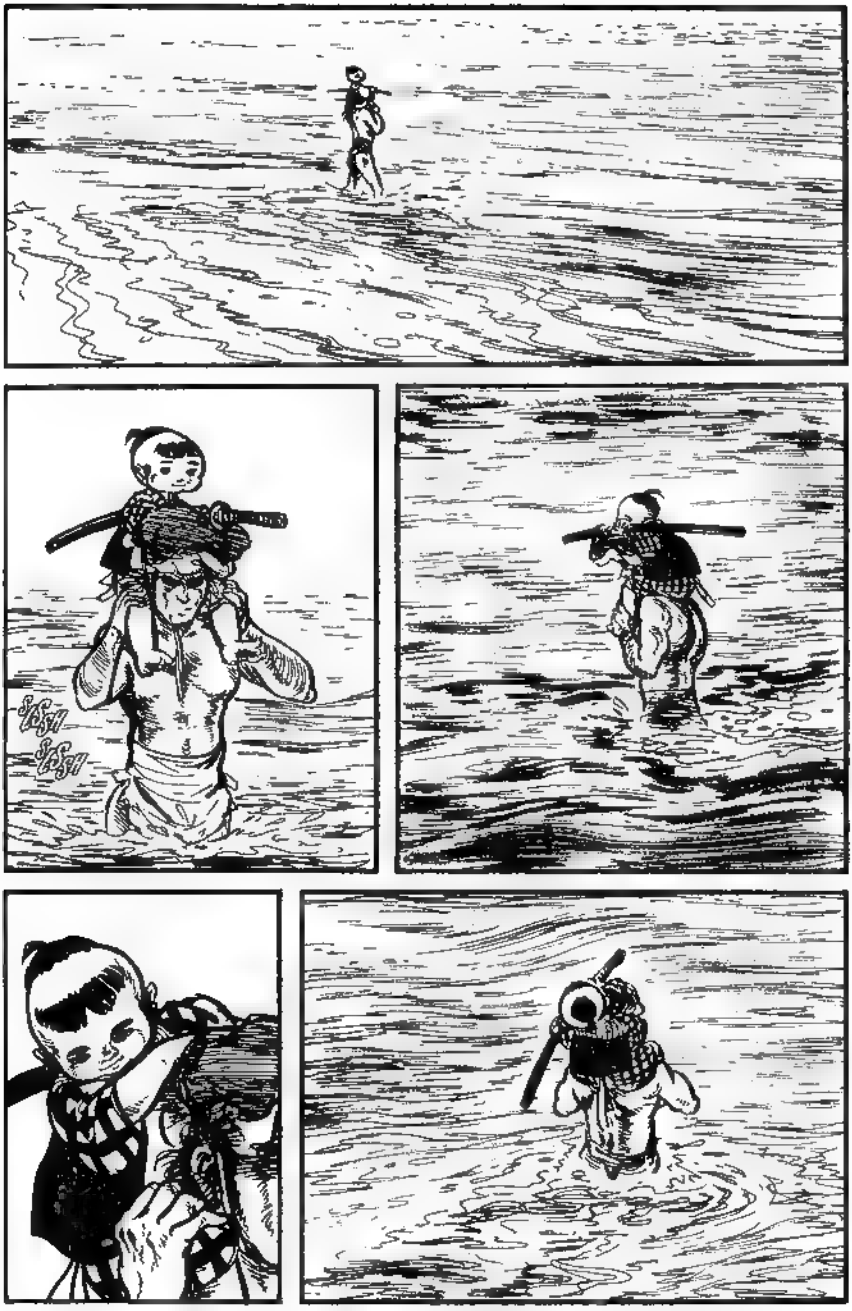

HUH? WHAT'S THIS CRAP?!
A WHOLE BU! NOW THAT'S MORE LIKE IT!
YO, BOYS! THANK THE GENTLEMAN!
JUST PUT HE DOWN!!


HEH, HEH. THANKEE KINDLY, SIR!
Y'ALL HAVE A GREAT TRIP!
BWA HAW HAW!
LOOKIT 'EM RUN!


HUH. ?
.....
.....
HEY!


THAT BASSUD! WHAT'S *HE* THINK HE'S DOIN'?!
HE'S STEAL'N' OUR *JOBS*, THAT TURD!
HOLD IT *HOLD IT!*


EVEN A STARVIN' DOG'S GOT TEETH.
PLAY THIS WRONG, AND WE COULD GET THE CHOP!
YEAH!
WAIT UNTIL HE'S IN THE DEEPEST STRETCH.
ONCE HE'S IN THE RIVER, HE'S OURS.
GOTCHA, BOSS!

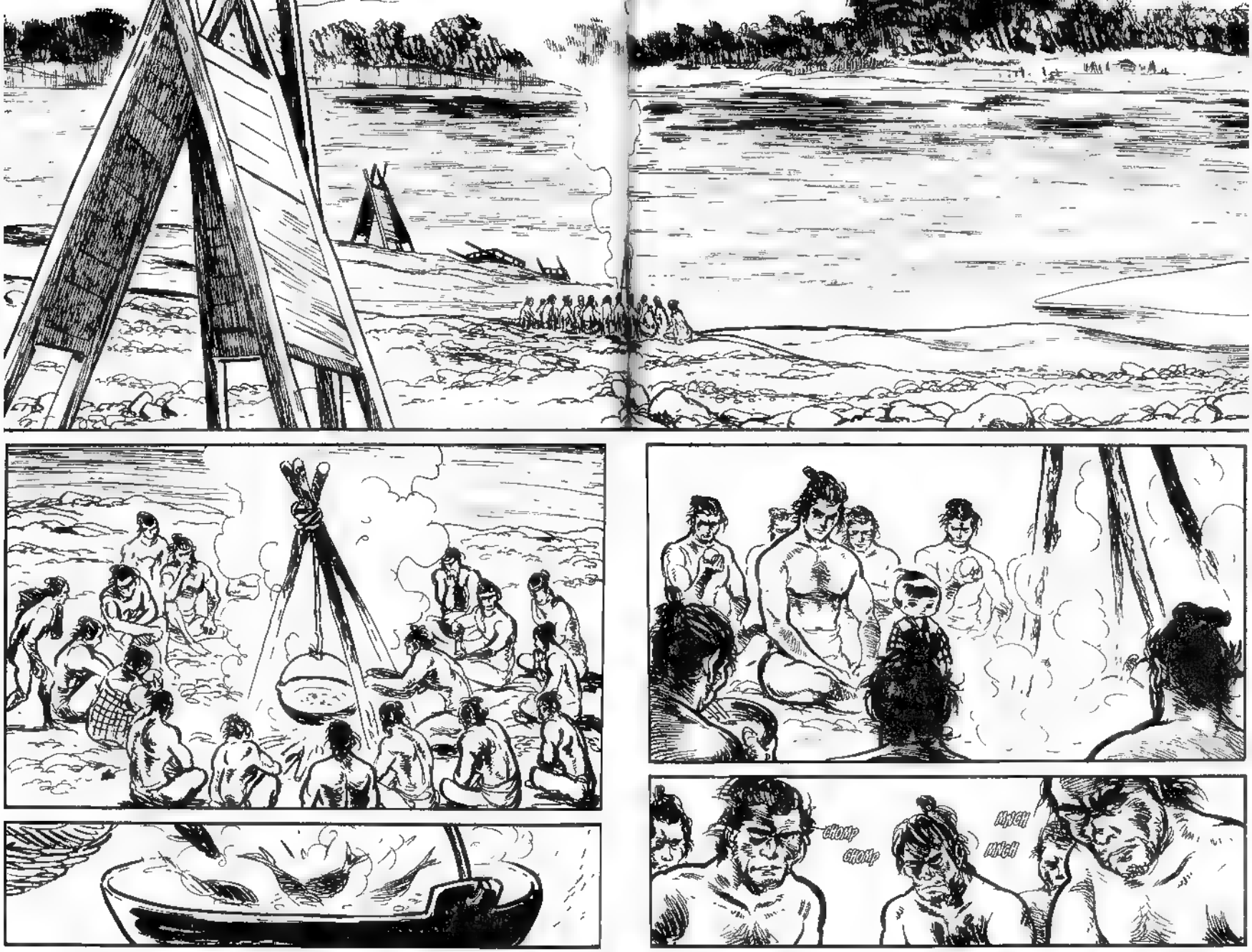

SHSH!
SHSH!


SKSSH
SKSSH
SKSSH
SKSSH
SKSSH
SKOSH


GO-RŌNIN! IT'S AG'INST THE RULES T' CROSS BY YERSELF!
GET YER ASS BACK TO SHORE AND USE A RENDA! OR OUR SHOULDERS!
....
....
THAT SORTA THING IS BAD FOR BUSINESS, SEE?
YEAH! WE'RE OUT HERE NIGHT 'N' DAY, WALKIN' THE RAPIDS, FINDIN' WHERE IT'S SAFE TO CROSS!
THE RIVER'S CHANGIN' ALL TH' TIME, Y'SEE?! YA CAN'T JUST MOSEY ACROSS AFTER WE'VE DONE THE DANGEROUS WORK!
'SIDES, IF EVERYONE TRIES CROSSIN' LIKE YOU, HOW IS WE GONNA EAT?!
AND DON'T SAY YA DON'T GOT NO DOUGH! NOT WHEN YA GOT THAT FANCY CHOPPER!


IF YA GOTTA CROSS BY YERSELF, GO DOWN-STREAM!
OF COURSE, IT'S SO DEEP YOU GOTTA SWIM!
WELL?!
I'M NOT TRYING TO CROSS.
HUH?!
I'M SEEING IF I CAN BE A HADAKA-MUSHI.
ARE YOU. . HUH?!


I'M SERIOUS
SO... WILL YOU LET ME JOIN?!
ARE...ARE YOU CRAZY? A SAMURAI CAN'T CARRY PEASANTS AND TOWN FOLK ON HIS BACK!
I'LL DO WHAT IT TAKES TO EAT
I'VE FORGOTTEN I WAS EVER A SAMURAI!
HUH...HE DON'T SOUND LIKE HE'S JOKIN' .
Y-YEAH..AND HE'S GOT A KID TO FEED.. THAT'S GOTTA BE TOUGH!


CHOMP
CHOMP
MNGH
MNGH


MNGH
MNGH
GULP


MNCH
SLRP
CHOMP
SLRRP


WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YA *ATE?*
EIGHT THIS MORNING.
HMM.
GIVE THE KID SOME *GRUB!*
YASSIR!


AIN'T SCARED A'TALL, ARE YA, KID?
HERE YA GO!
C'MON, KID! EAT!
IF YA AIN'T HAD NOTHIN' SINCE MORNIN', THAT MEANS YA AIN'T ET ALL DAY! YA OUGHTTA BE STARVIN'!
HUH! WEIRD LITTLE BRAT!
I THOUGHT SO! ANY NORMAL KID WOULD WATCH THET FOOD LIKE A HAWK BUT NOT HIM! HE MAY BE DOWN AN' OUT, BUT ONCE A SAMURAI, ALWAYS A SAMURAI! TH' KID'S CENTERED! HE'S GOT THAT DISCIPLINE GOIN'!

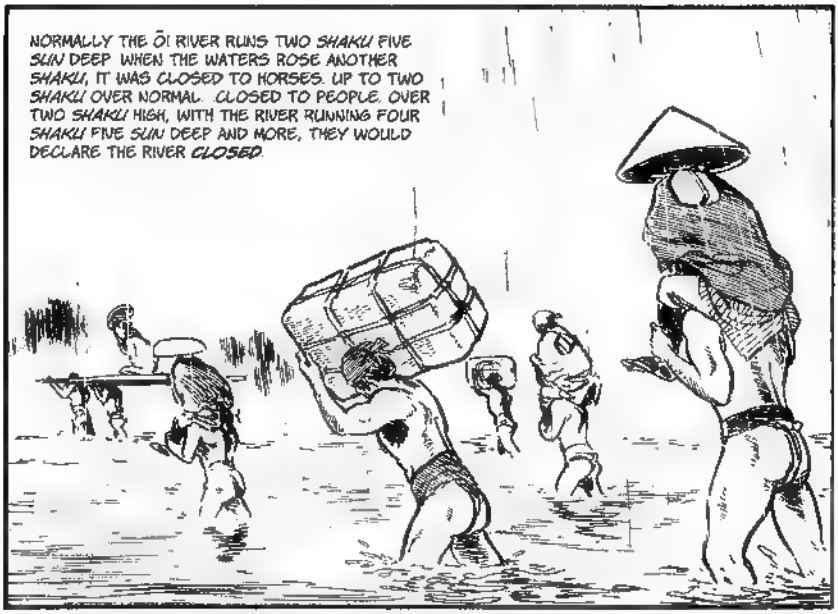

HE AIN'T A BEGGAR, AND HE WON'T TAKE HANDOUTS SO TELL ME--WHY'S SAMURAI DADDY TRYING TO BE A HADAKA-MUSHI!?!
I ALREADY TOLD YOU
AND I SAY YOU'RE LYIN'!
SURE, WE GET GUYS BEGGIN' TO BE HADAKA-MUSHI DOWN AND OUT ON THE SKIDS! YA CAN SEE 'EM DROOL WHEN WE EAT.
BUT YOU AND YOUR BRAT DON'T SHOW NOTHIN'!
DADDY CAN ACT TOUGH, BUT KIDS ARE HONEST IF THEY'RE HUNGRY, THEY EAT!
KNOW THE CHILD, KNOW THE PARENT! THIS KID'S DAD MUST BE ONE TOUGH SUNUVA-BITCH OF A SAMURAI!
YEAH. THERE'S SOMETHIN' SPECIAL ABOUT YOU, PAL!
DON'T THINK YOU CAN PUT ONE OVER ON THE HADAKA-MUSHI! SPRING, SUMMER, FALL, WINTER, WE'RE OUT HERE BUCK NAKED, LIVIN' ON THE EDGE!

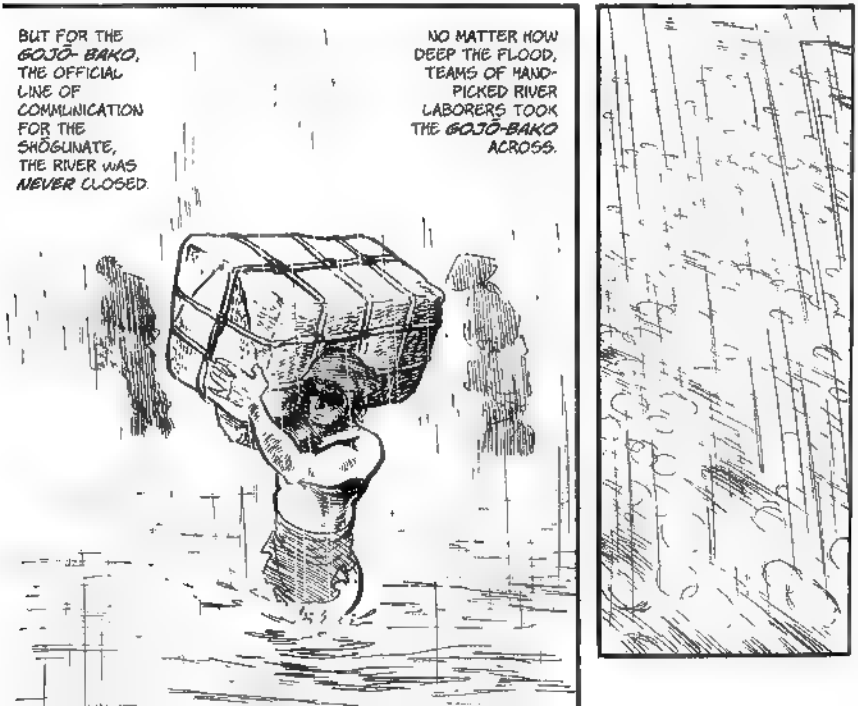

SO WE KNOW HOW TH' WORLD WORKS WE KIN SEE RIGHT THROUGH THEM BASTARDS WE CARRY ON OUR BACKS!
NO WAY YOU'RE SOME BEGGAR RŌNIN! I DON'T EVEN THINK YOU'RE HUNGRY!
SO-- WHY A HADAKA-MUSHI?!
TELL ME STRAIGHT, AND MAYBE.
SO WE CAN LIVE, FATHER AND SON. NO OTHER REASON.
YO, BOYS! DO WE LET HIM IN?!
OR DO WE KICK HIS ASS? WHICH?!


I'M AG'INST IT, BOSS! THIS AIN'T THE KIND'A WORK HE KIN HACK WITH THEM TWO SWORDS OF HIS! HE'LL JES' SLACK OFF AN' CAUSE TROUBLE!
WE CAIN'T GET ALONG WITH HIS TYPE!
DAMN STRAIGHT! HE WON'T PLAY TH' GAME, SEE?
WE MAKE OUR LIVIN' RIPPIN' OFF CUSTOMERS, RIGHT?! BUT LOOKIT 'IM! HIS ASS IS SO TIGHT IT'S CRACKIN' CHESTNUTS!
WHAT DOES JIDANDA THE BOSS-MAN SAY?
I SAY WE TAKE HIM.
HUH?!
ARE YOU KIDDIN'..
I SAY WE TAKE HIM!!
Y-YASSIR...!
S-SURE B-BOSS!
YEAH, IF JIDANDA SAYS SO WE DON'T MIND!
NO, SIRREE. NOT US!

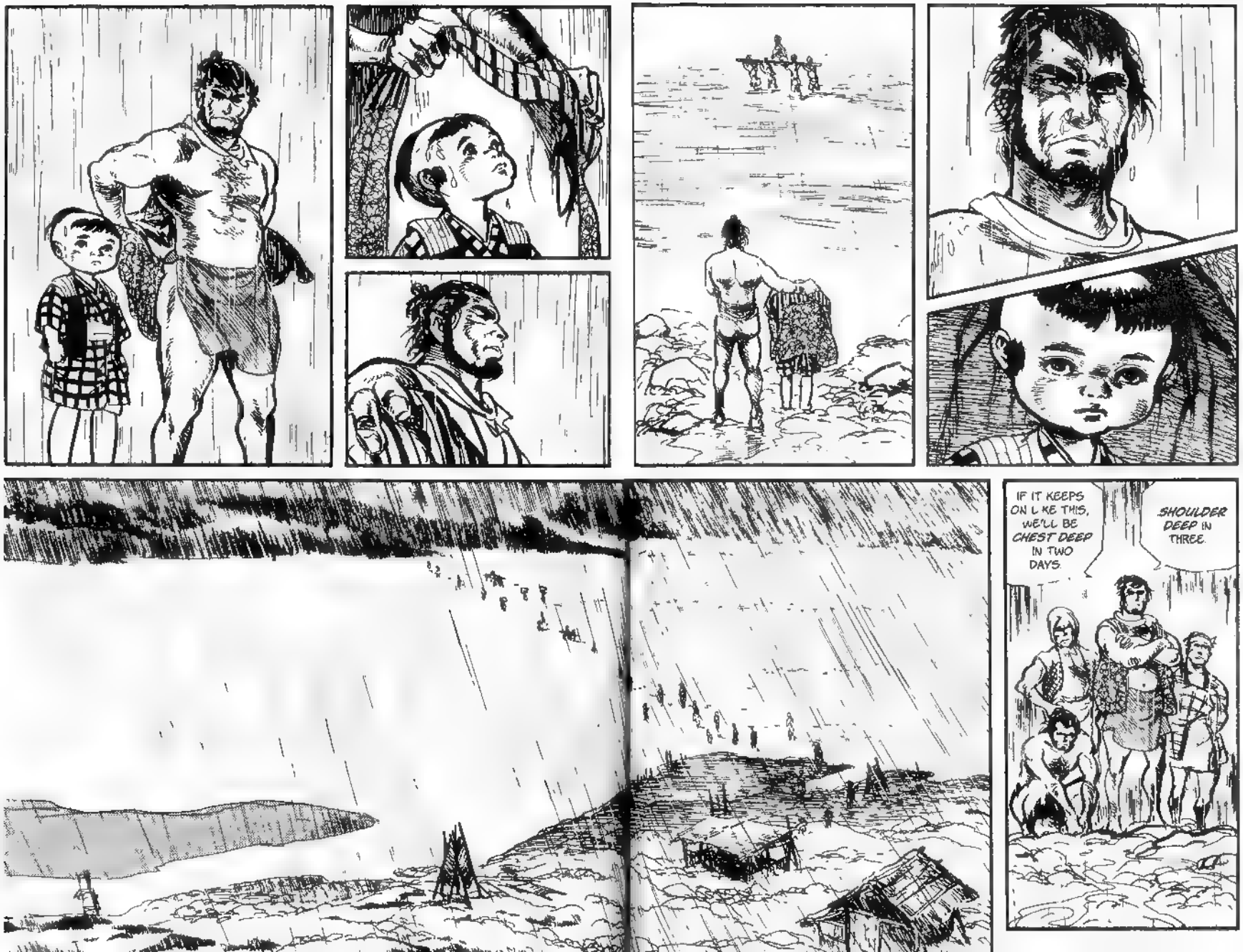

THEN IT'S DECIDED YOU START TOMORROW!
UNDER-STOOD
I'M JIDANDA KARIZŌ
BOSS OF THE HADAKA-MUSHI
AND I'M-
NAW DON'T NEED TO KNOW.
FROM NOW ON, YOU'RE CALLED "THE BABY-SITTER."
GOT THAT, BOYS?!
FROM NOW ON THE BABYSITTER'S ONE OF US! TEACH HIM ALL YA KNOW!
YASSIR!
AND TAKE TURNS WATCHING THE KID! GOT IT?!
YASSIR!

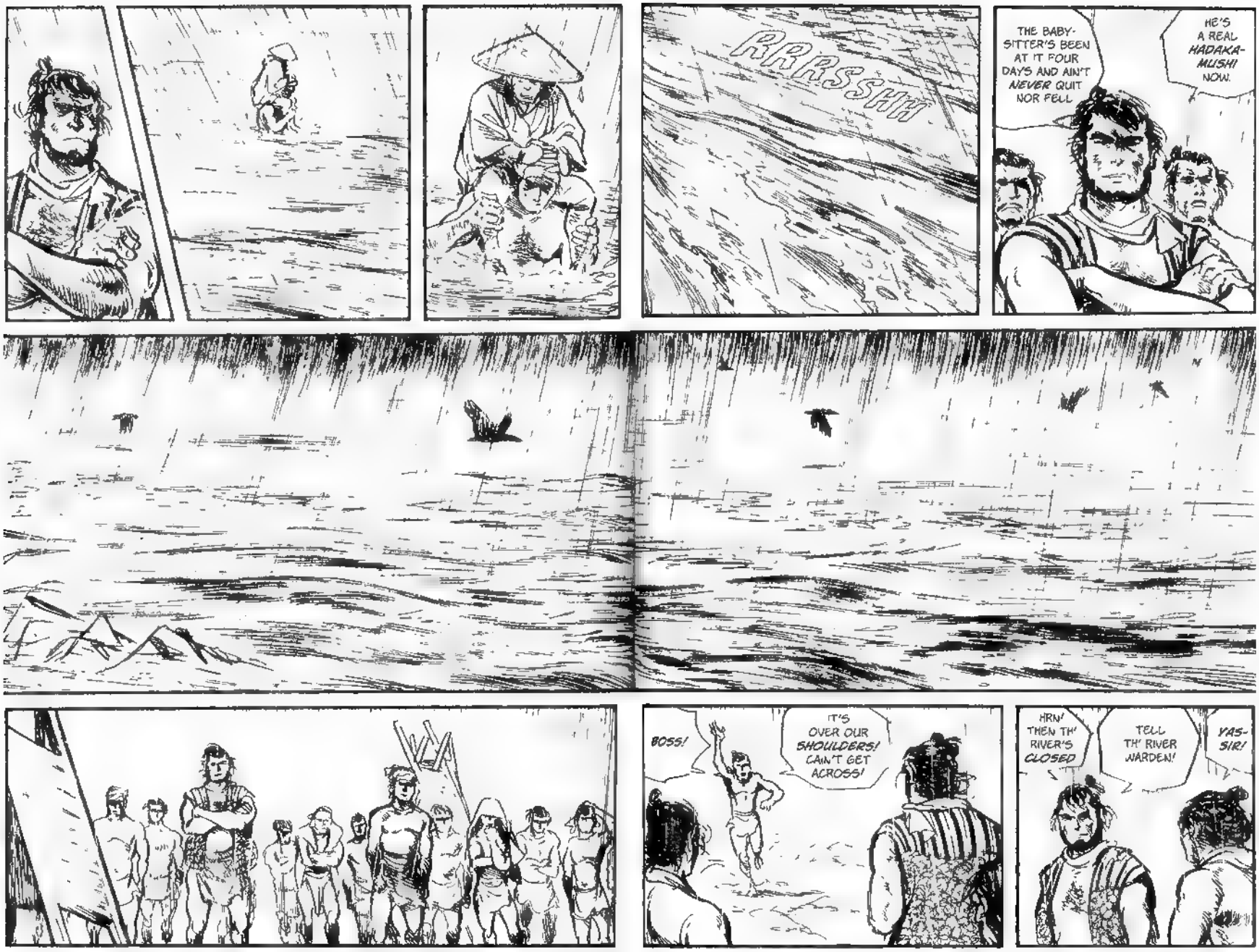

RAINY SEASON'S COMIN' ON EARLY DAMN!


NORMALLY THE ŌI RIVER RUNS TWO *SHAKU* FIVE *SUN* DEEP. WHEN THE WATERS ROSE ANOTHER *SHAKU*, IT WAS CLOSED TO HORSES. UP TO TWO *SHAKU* OVER NORMAL. CLOSED TO PEOPLE. OVER TWO *SHAKU* HIGH, WITH THE RIVER RUNNING FOUR *SHAKU* FIVE *SUN* DEEP AND MORE, THEY WOULD DECLARE THE RIVER *CLOSED*.


BUT FOR THE *GOJŌ- BAKO*, THE OFFICIAL LINE OF COMMUNICATION FOR THE SHŌGUNATE, THE RIVER WAS *NEVER* CLOSED.
NO MATTER HOW DEEP THE FLOOD, TEAMS OF HAND-PICKED RIVER LABORERS TOOK THE *GOJŌ-BAKO* ACROSS.


KSSSHHH


IF IT KEEPS ON LIKE THIS, WE'LL BE CHEST DEEP IN TWO DAYS.
SHOULDER DEEP IN THREE.


RRRSSHH
THE BABY-SITTER'S BEEN AT IT FOUR DAYS AND AIN'T NEVER QUIT NOR FELL
HE'S A REAL HADAKA-MUSHI NOW.
BOSS!
IT'S OVER OUR SHOULDERS! CAIN'T GET ACROSS!
HRN! THEN TH' RIVER'S CLOSED
TELL TH' RIVER WARDEN!
YAS-SIR!


SO BE IT I'LL DECLARE IT CLOSED.
BUT WE HAVE A GOJŌ-BAKO COMING THROUGH AT THE CRACK OF DAWN, AND IT HAS TO GET ACROSS. SO PICK TWENTY GOOD MEN!
YES-SIR.




THE GOJO-BAKO GOJŌ WERE THE OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE OF THE OUT-POSTS OF THE SHŌGUNATE. CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE JŌDAI CASTLE WARDEN OF OSAKA CASTLE, FROM THE SHIDAI REPRESENTATIVE IN THE IMPERIAL COURT CITY OF KYŌTO FROM BAKUFUSHO IN EVERY PART OF JAPAN ALL STREAMING BACK TO EDO IN THEIR HEAVILY GUARDED WATERPROOFED BAKO BOXES

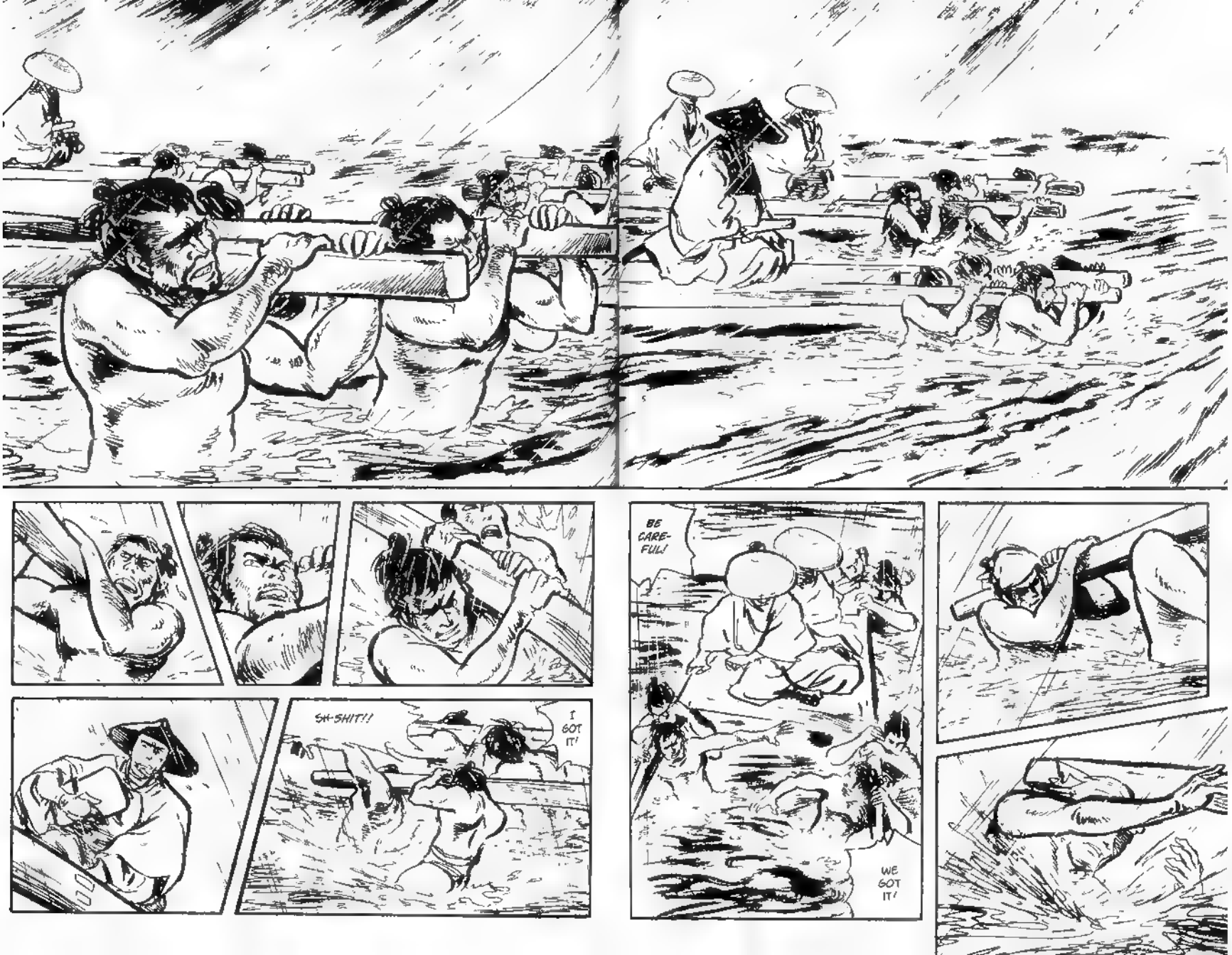



THE FIRST PLATFORM WILL CARRY THE GOJŌ-BAKO
YES, SIR!
ARE YOU READY?!
SIR!
READY, BOYS?!
HE!!!-YO!!!


BABY-SITTER! YOU TAKE THE LEAD RENDAI!
DO YER DUTY!
....
....


TAKE 'EM ACROSS!!
HEIII-YO!!

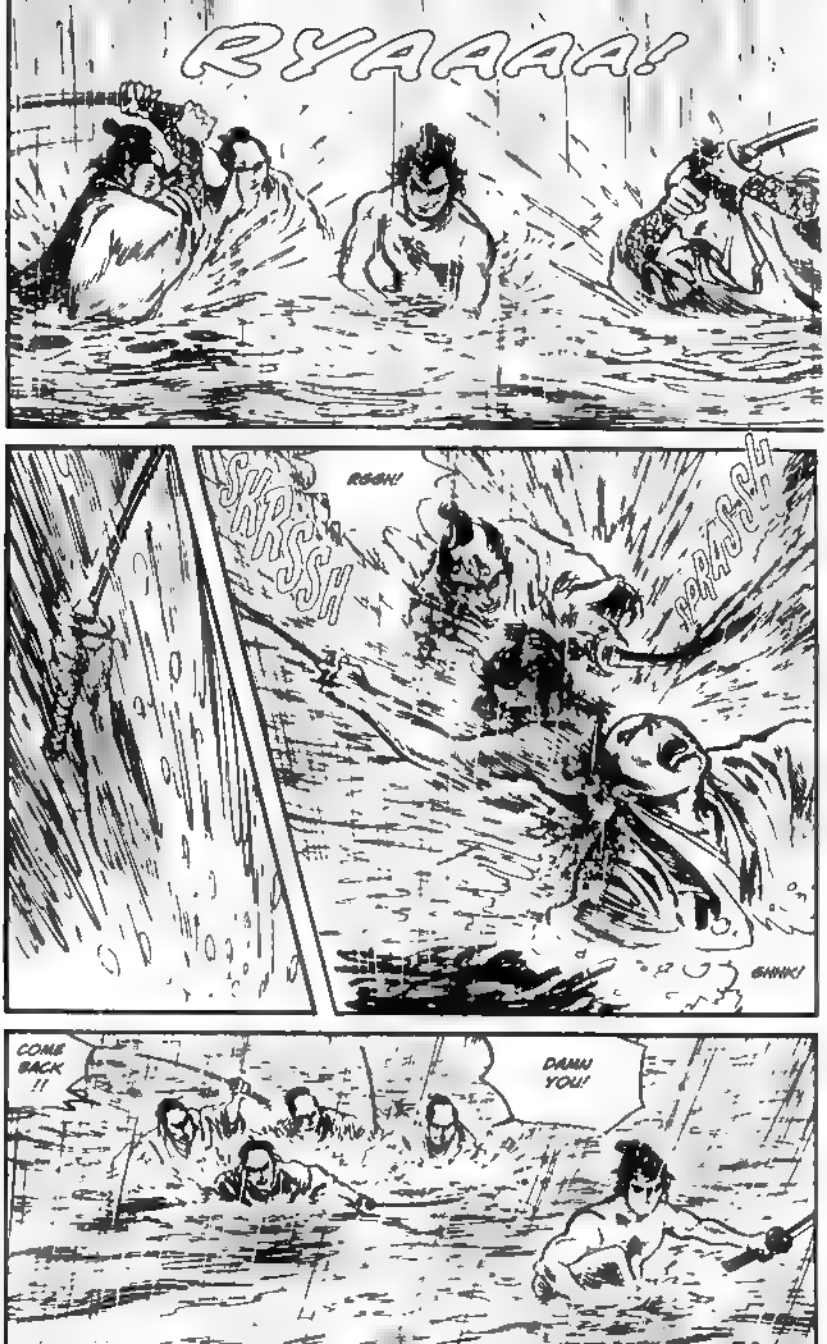



SH-SHIT!!
I GOT IT!
BE CARE-FUL!
WE GOT IT!


GAH!
NGH!
YAAH!
SHIT!!
BLOOSH
AUUGHK!


HEY! WHA-?!
DAMN!
EKK!
WH- WHO ARE YOU?!
HE'S GOT THE GOJŌ BAKO!
HEKK!
BASTARD!


D-DAMN! YOU S-SAVE IT BACK!!

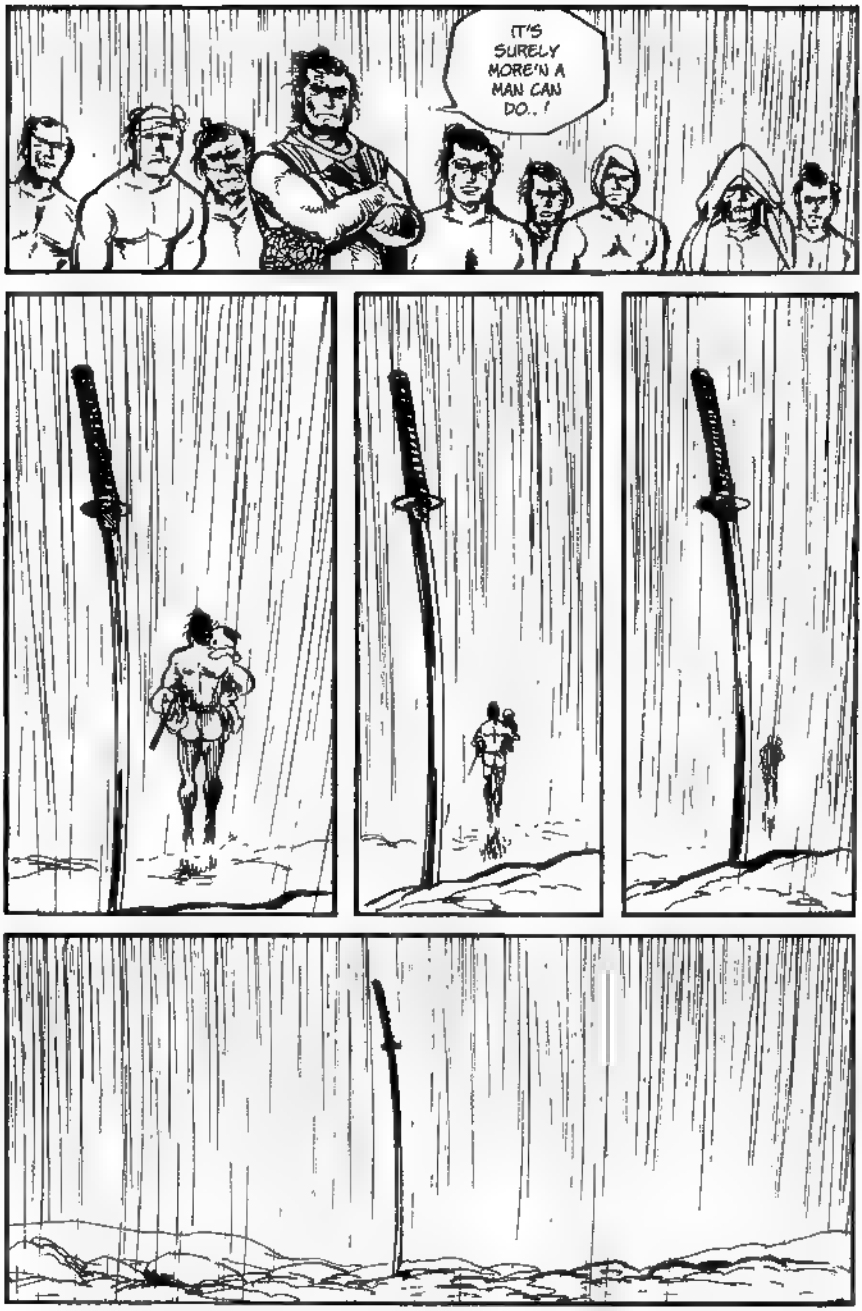

RYAAAA!
SKRSSH
RSSH!
SPRSSH
GHHK!
COME BACK !!
DAMN YOU!


M-MY GOD!! WHAT THE—?!
IT'S A DISASTER! A DISASTER!
MM. JUST AS I THOUGHT.
VILLAIN! HALT!!
GET HIM!


SKASH
SKSSH
WGHOK


PAPA!
GUNK
SON OF A BITCH!
THE GOJÔ BAKO..!


LET HIM GO!
THERE GOES A REAL SAMURAI, BOYS! A REAL SAMURAI, WHEN THERE AIN'T NO MORE LIKE THAT LEFT IN THE WHOLE WORLD!
WE HADAKA-MUSHI CAN TELL THIS STORY FER GENERATIONS THAT THERE WAS STILL ONE SAMURAI LIKE 'IM LEFT
MAKIN' HISSELF ONE O' US, CARRY-ING PEASANTS AND TOWN FOLK ON HIS BACK
ALL FOR HIS GOAL. AND ALL WITH HIS KID AT HIS SIDE. DAMN. I DUNNO WHAT KIND'A QUEST YER ON...
BUT IT'S MORE'N A MAN CAN DO.

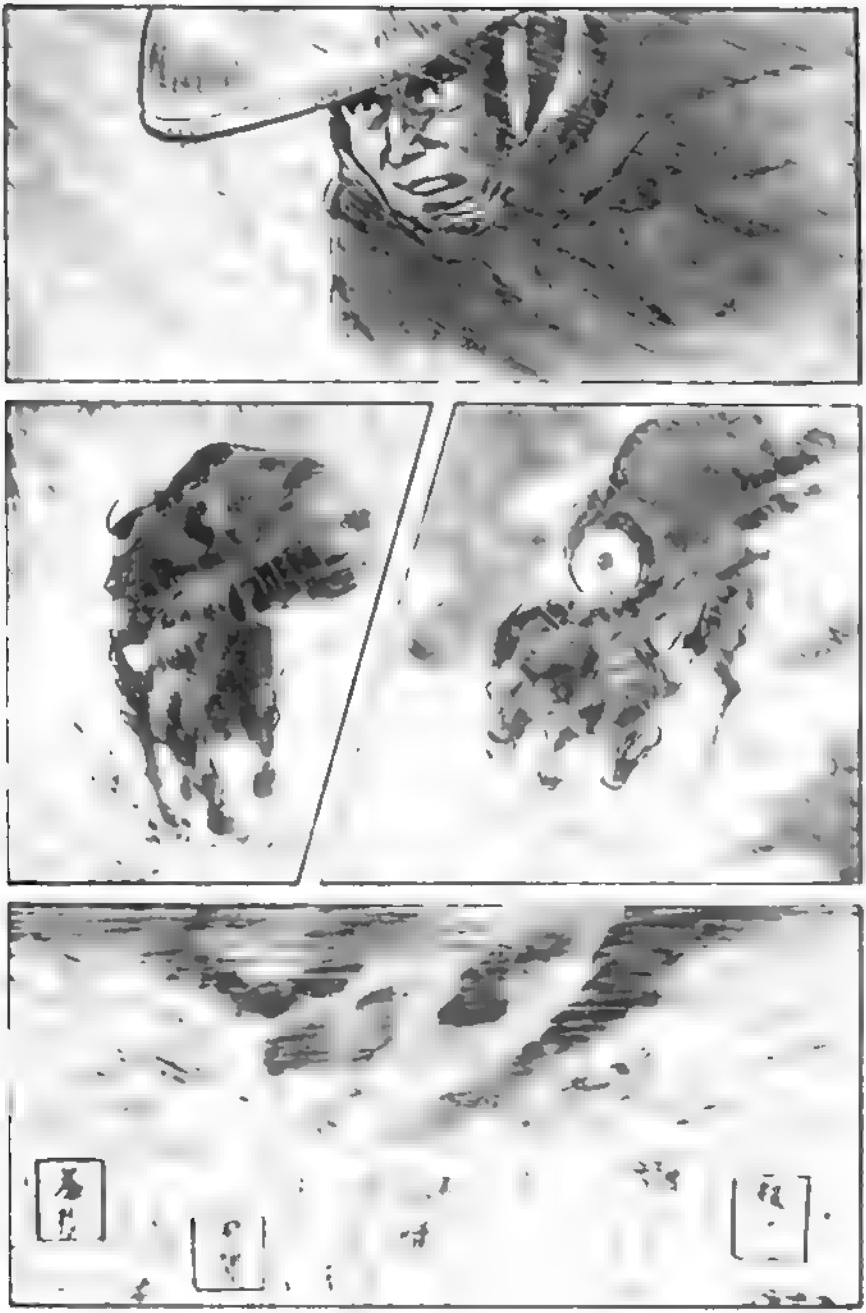

IT'S SURELY MORE'N A MAN CAN DO..!

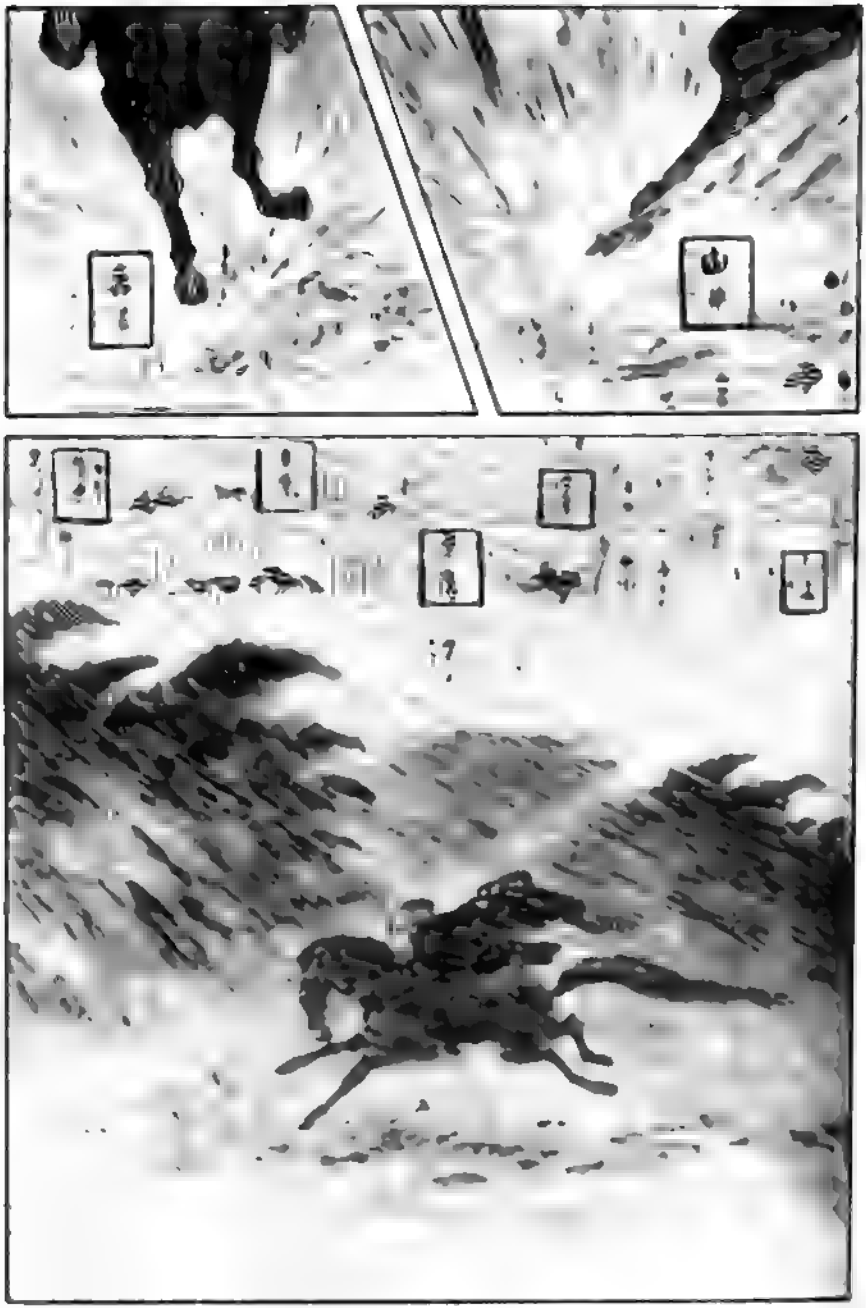
the forty-ninth

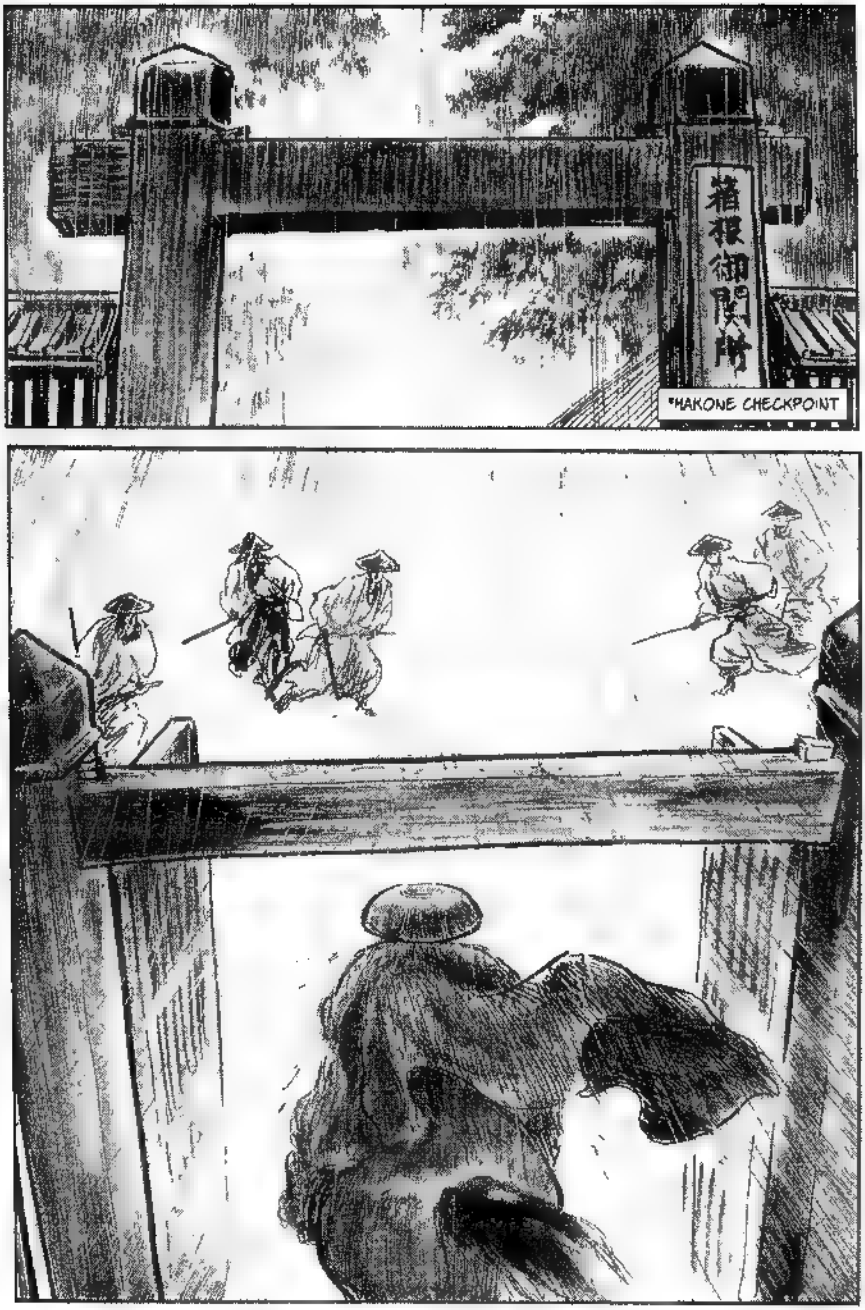


The Yagyū Letter: Prologue

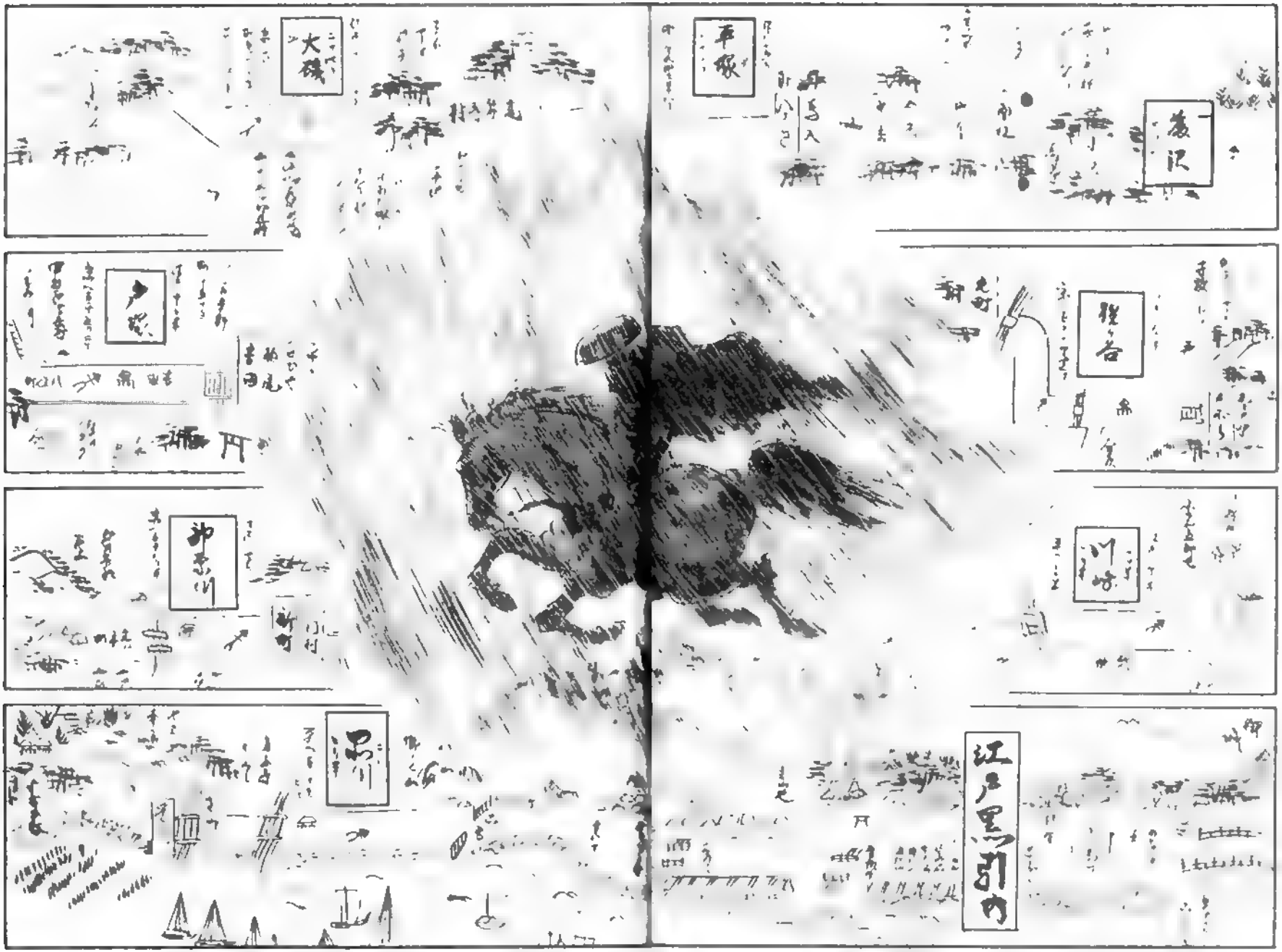
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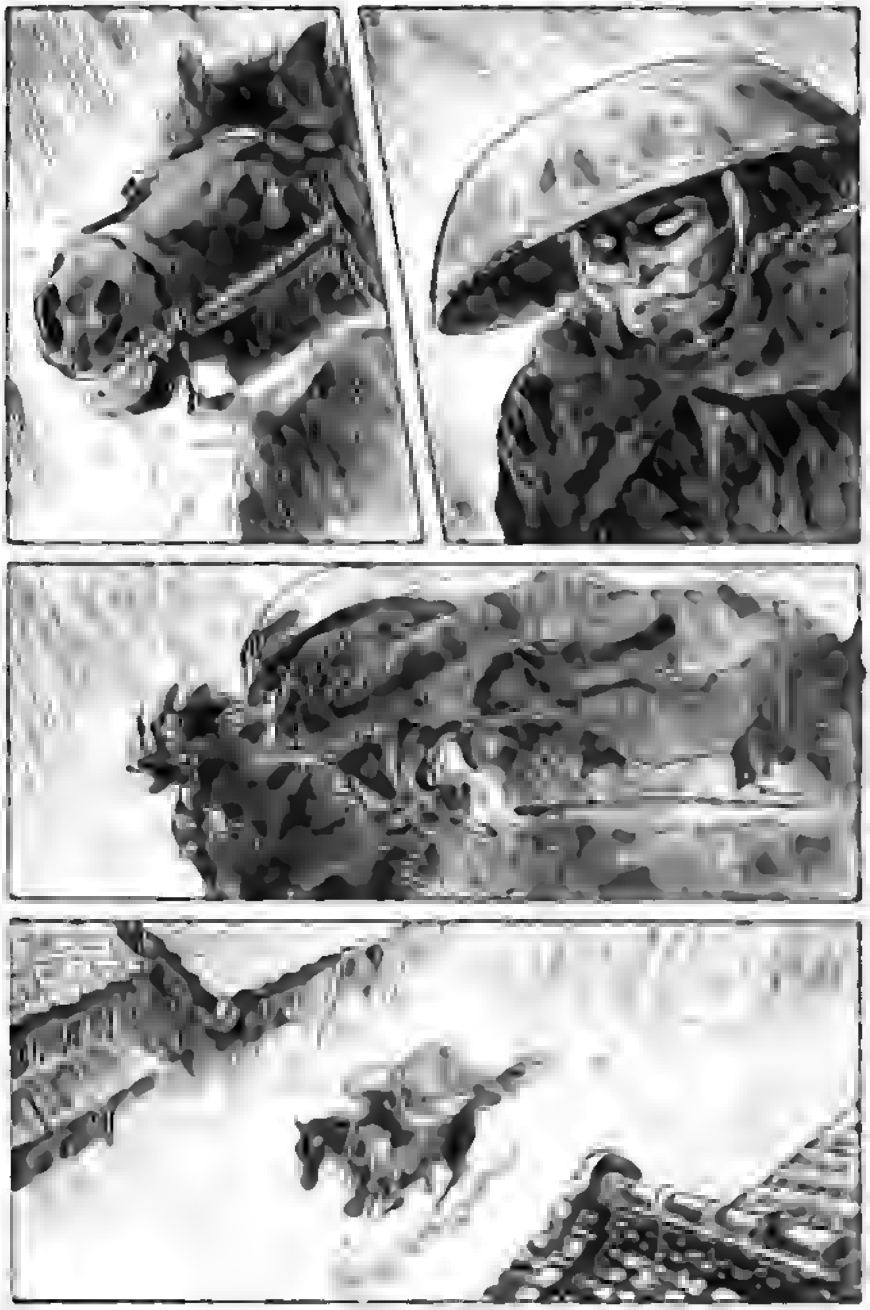





箱根御関所
*HAKONE CHECKPOINT

THOUGHTS


大磯
戸塚
神奈川
品川
江戸日本橋
箱根
程ヶ谷
川崎



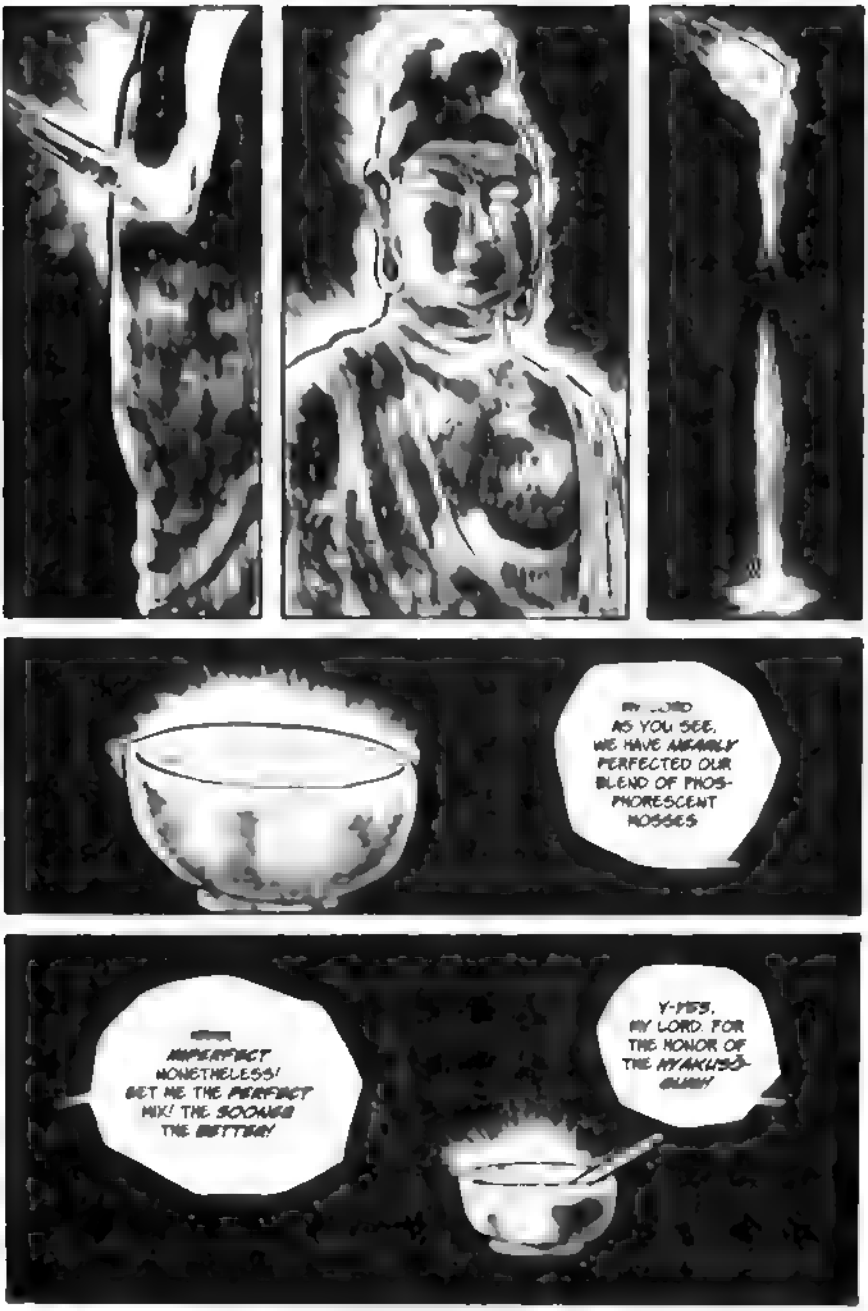





O
OPEN THE
GATE!


@WHAT?




MY LORD, AS YOU SEE, WE HAVE NEARLY PERFECTED OUR BLEND OF PHOSPHORESCENT MOSSES
Y-YES, MY LORD. FOR THE HONOR OF THE MYAKUJŌ CLAN!
IMPERFECT NONETHELESS! GET ME THE PERFECT MIX! THE SOONER THE BETTER!


MY LORD! A KUROKUMA RIDER AT THE GATES. HE SAYS HE BEARS URGENT NEWS.


WHAT?!


THIS IS TRUE?!
YES, MY LORD!


HE STOLE A GOJŌ-BAKO?!
MY LORD ŌGAMI. ITTŌ IMPERSONATED A HADAKA-MUSHI, AND SEIZED THE BOX AT THE ŌI RIVER CROSSING


RRGAAH !!
DAMN YOU, ŌGAMI ITTŌ! IF YOU STOLE THAT BOX, YOU'VE SNIFFED OUT THE DEEPEST SECRET OF THE URA-YAGYŪ!
THERE'S NO TIME TO LOSE! WE NEED THE LETTER BACK! UNTIL NOW WE'VE HONORED OUR PLEDGE NEVER TO ATTACK YOU HEAD-ON! BUT DID YOU THINK THAT WAS THE LIMIT OF OUR POWER?!
PLUNDER OUR SECRETS, WILL YOU? BAH! YOU HAVEN'T THE WITS TO FIGURE THEM OUT! TO YOU IT'S JUST ANOTHER GOJŌ LETTER, NOTHING MORE!


BUT BY STEALING IT, YOU'VE UNKNOWINGLY CHALLENGED THE URA-YAGYŪ DIRECTLY!
YOU'VE ENDED OUR PACT OF YOUR OWN ACCORD! FOOL! DON'T YOU SEE HOW POWERLESS YOU ARE?!
LISTEN WELL! THE TRUCE IS OVER! THE URA-YAGYŪ RISE IN FORCE TO STRIKE DOWN ŌGAMI ITTŌ!
WE MUST RETAKE THE GOJŌ-BAKO!


THE FATE OF THE CLAN HANGS IN THE BALANCE!
THE FIRST WAVE! AN ALL-OUT ASSAULT BY THE KURO-KUWA!
IF HE BREAKS THEM, A SECOND WAVE! THE COMBINED ARCHERS AND RIFLE-MEN OF SUWA AND NUMAZU HAN!
DAMN YOU, ŌGAMI ITTŌ!
SEE THE TRUE POWER OF THE YAGYŪ ASSASSINS!

GLOSSARY

ashigara
A lightly armed foot soldier, one of the lowest ranks of the samurai caste.

bu
A small coin, worth 1/4th of a *ryō*.

buke
A samurai household.

bushi
A samurai. A member of the warrior class.

bushidō
The way of the warrior.

daikansho
The office of the *daikan*, the primary local representative of the shōgunate in territories outside of Edo. The *daikan* and his staff collected taxes owed to Edo and oversaw public works, agriculture, and other projects administered by the central government.

daimyō
A feudal lord.

Edo
The capital of medieval Japan and the seat of the shōgunate. The site of modern-day Tokyo.

han
A feudal domain.

hanshi
Samurai in the service of a *han*.

honorifics
Japan is a class and status society, and proper forms of address are critical. Common markers of respect are the prefixes *o* and *go*, and a wide range of suffixes. Some of the suffixes you will encounter in *Lone Wolf and Cub*:
chan – for children, young women, and close friends
dono – archaic; used for higher-ranked or highly respected figures
sama – used for superiors
san – the most common, used among equals or near-equals
sensei – used for teachers, masters, respected entertainers, and politicians

jōdai
Castle warden. The ranking *han* official in charge of a *daimyō*'s castle when the *daimyō* was spending his obligatory years in Edo.

kōgi kaishakunin
The shōgun's own second, who performed executions ordered by the shōgun.

koku
A bale of rice. The traditional measure of a *han*'s wealth, a measure of its agricultural land and productivity.

meifumadō
The Buddhist Hell. The way of demons and damnation.

o-niwaban
A ninja. Literally, "one in the garden." Ninja had their heyday in the time of

warring states before the rise of the Tokugawa clan. Originally mercenaries serving different warlords, by the Edo period they were in the service of the central government. The most famous were the ninja of Iga and Kaga, north of Kyoto. The Kurokuwa that appear in *Lone Wolf and Cub* were officially the laborers and manual workers in Edo Castle. Whether they truly served as a secret spy corps is lost in history.

rendai
Platforms used for carrying travelers across rivers. Named for their resemblance to the *rendai* (lotus platform) altar in Buddhist temples.

rōjū
Senior councilors. The inner circle of councilors directly advising the shōgun. The *rōjū* were the ultimate advisory body to the Tokugawa shōgunate's national government.

rōnin
A masterless samurai. Literally, "one adrift on the waves." Members of the samurai caste who have lost their masters through the dissolution of *han*, expulsion for misbehavior, or other reasons. Prohibited from working as farmers or merchants under the strict Confucian caste system imposed by the Tokugawa shōgunate, many impoverished *rōnin* became "hired guns" for whom the code of the samurai was nothing but empty words.

ryū
Often translated as "school." The many variations of swordsmanship and other martial arts were passed down from generation to generation to the offspring of the originator of the technique or set of techniques, and to any *deshi* students that sought to learn from the master. The largest schools had their own *dōjō* training centers and scores of students. An effective swordsman had to study the different techniques of the various schools to know how to block them in combat. Many *ryū* also had a set of special, secret techniques that were only taught to school initiates.

sankin kōtai
The Tokugawa required that all *daimyō* spend every other year in Edo, with family members remaining behind when they returned to their *han*. This practice increased Edo's control over the *daimyō*, both political and fiscal, since the cost of maintaining two separate households and traveling to and from the capital placed a huge strain on *han* finances.

sengoku
Warring states. For two centuries between the old central rule in Kyoto and the rise of Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), the first unifier of Japan, the country was in a state of anarchy, riven by constant civil war between rival warlords.

shaku
10 *sun*, approximately 30 centimeters.

shinzo
The young wife of another man.

sun
Approximately 3 centimeters.

yakuza
Japan's criminal syndicates. In the Edo period, *yakuza* were a common part of the landscape, running houses of gambling and prostitution. As long as they did not overstep their bounds, they were tolerated by the authorities, a tradition little changed in modern Japan.

KAZUO KOIKE

Though widely respected as a powerful writer of graphic fiction, Kazuo Koike has spent a lifetime reaching beyond the bounds of the comics medium. Aside from co-creating and writing the successful *Lone Wolf and Cub* and *Crying Freeman* manga, Koike has hosted television programs; founded a golf magazine; produced movies; written popular fiction, poetry, and screenplays; and mentored some of Japan's best manga talent.

Lone Wolf and Cub was first serialized in Japan in 1970 (under the title *Kozure Okami*) in *Manga Action* magazine and continued its hugely popular run for many years, being collected as the stories were published, and reprinted worldwide. Koike collected numerous awards for his work on the series throughout the next decade. Starting in 1972, Koike adapted the popular manga into a series of six films, the *Baby Cart Assassin* saga, garnering widespread commercial success and critical acclaim for his screenwriting.

This wasn't Koike's only foray into film and video. In 1996, *Crying Freeman*, the manga Koike created with artist Ryoichi Ikegami, was produced in Hollywood and released to commercial success in Europe and is currently awaiting release in America.

And to give something back to the medium that gave him so much, Koike started the *Gekiga Sonjuku*, a college course aimed at helping talented writers and artists — such as *Ranma 1/2* creator Rumiko Takahashi — break into the comics field.

The driving focus of Koike's narrative is character development, and his commitment to character is clear: "Comics are carried by characters. If a character is well created, the comic becomes a hit." Kazuo Koike's continued success in comics and literature has proven this philosophy true.



GOSEKI KOJIMA

Goseki Kojima was born on November 3, 1928, the very same day as the godfather of Japanese comics, Osamu Tezuka. While just out of junior high school, the self-taught Kojima began painting advertising posters for movie theaters to pay his bills.

In 1950, Kojima moved to Tokyo, where the postwar devastation had given rise to special manga forms for audiences too poor to buy the new manga magazines. Kojima created art for *kami-shibai*, or "paper-play" narrators, who would use manga story sheets to present narrated street plays. Kojima moved on to creating works for the *kashi-bon* market, bookstores that rented out books, magazines, and manga to mostly low-income readers. He soon became highly popular among *kashi-bon* readers.

In 1967, Kojima broke into the magazine market with his series *Dojinki*. As the manga magazine market grew and diversified, he turned out a steady stream of popular series.

In 1970, in collaboration with Kazuo Koike, Kojima began the work that would seal his reputation, *Kozure Okami* (*Lone Wolf and Cub*). Before long the story had become a gigantic hit, eventually spinning off a television series, six motion pictures, and even theme-song records. Koike and Kojima were soon dubbed the "golden duo" and produced success after success on their way to the pinnacle of the manga world.

When *Manga Japan* magazine was launched in 1994, Kojima was asked to serve as consultant, and he helped train the next generation of manga artists.

In his final years, Kojima turned to creating original graphic novels based on the movies of his favorite director, Akira Kurosawa. Kojima passed away on January 5, 2000 at the age of 71.

